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ABSTRACT

Three booklets focusing on dyed and printed textile techniques of Java, West Africa, and the Netherlands describe historical and ethnographic materials as well as the development of particular technical traditions. Each section may be used alone or with either or both of the others. When used together, these booklets illustrate the cross-fertilization of cultures through trade and movement of people. Each booklet begins with a world map of trade routes. The first booklet focuses on Javanese batik, presenting a history of wax-resistant textiles and a section about Indonesia's land and people. Other topics include Javanese clothing, the use of batiked textiles, symbols from Javanese batik, origins of batik, processes and implements used to produce different effects, and dyes and dyestuffs. The second booklet focuses on the Dutch textile industry, Javanese influences, and engraved copper roller printing. Subsequent sections discuss the need for new markets, the West African market, and wax block printing today. The final booklet on West African adire provides sections on West African textiles, the land and people, Yorubaland, clothing, usage and distribution, motifs from adire cloth, and processes (tying, stitching, starch resist, and dying). Each book concludes with a list of additional resources and a bibliography. (LH)

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DYED AND PRINTED TEXTILES:

JAVANESE BATIK [and] DUTCH WAX PRINTS [and] WEST AFRICAN ADIRE

Third Edition

1981

Researched and Written By

Sue Burke

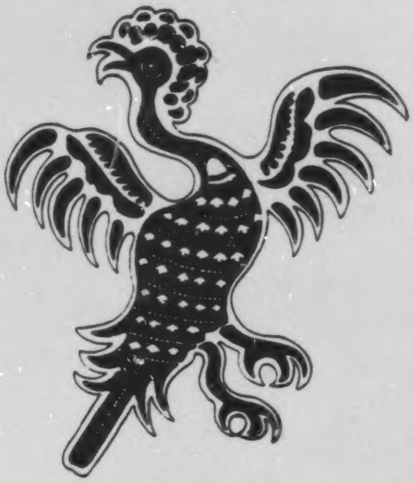
Birmingham Polytechnic
Department of Art
Ethnographic Resources for Art Education

SO 015 943

JAVANESE BATIK

DYED AND PRINTED TEXTILES

JAVANESE BATIK



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DYED & PRINTED TEXTILES FROM JAVA, WEST AFRICA AND HOLLAND

How to use this pack

Dyed & Printed Textiles is the second in a series of teaching and learning materials produced by "The Art in Multicultural Society Project". The intention of this pack is to present in a readily accessible form dyed and printed textile techniques from a variety of cultures. We hope that this pack will contribute to the fostering of a multicultural approach to visual arts and crafts because we firmly believe that familiarity with other traditions enriches the potential for innovation in artistic as well as cultural terms within our society.

The pack is in three sections each associated with a particular country. Each section draws together both historical and ethnographic materials as well as the development of particular technical traditions. Each section may either be used on its own or in conjunction with either or both of the others. When used together these booklets illustrate the cross-fertilisation of cultures through trade and movements of people. Another way the materials may be approached is via the colour-coded sections employed in each booklet. The historical and ethnographic material pertinent to each culture is printed on a yellow background; the techniques and dyes are on blue and the uses of the textiles, clothing and designs are brought together in the section on a green background. This colour coding is designed to provide a number of different ways of cross referencing material.

The slides available with the pack provide a unique visual resource bringing together examples from National Museums and private collections as well as illustrating processes. The slides are anotated and explained in each section and are also referred to widely in the text.

We hope that you will find this pack sufficiently flexible to suit your particular needs. We would be most appreciative of any comments you might have regarding the packs reception and in particular any suggestions for improvement.

Nick Stanley

Phil Slight

Helga Loeb

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESOURCES
FOR ART EDUCATION

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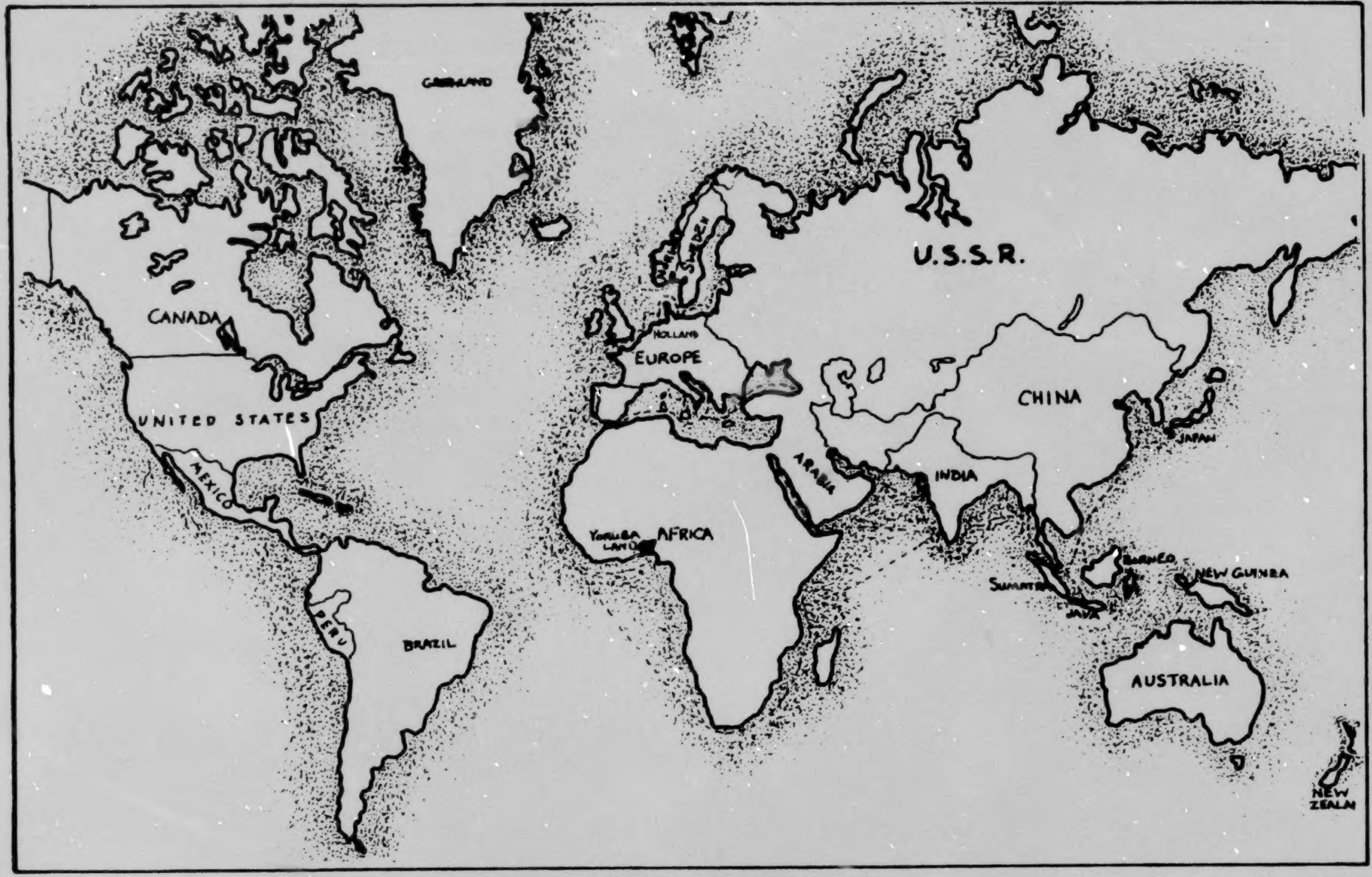
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WORLD MAP SHOWING TRADING ROUTES BETWEEN EUROPE AND INDONESIA.

HISTORY OF WAX-RESIST TEXTILES

For more than 2,000 years India has been renowned throughout the civilised world for her textiles, and is especially famous for her wide range of dyed cotton fabrics.

For many centuries, prior to the arrival of European traders in the East, there had been an extensive trade in painted and printed cottons, between India, China, Java and the Philippines. Although wax-resist textiles originated in India, they were most highly developed in Java. However, the copper-block technique used in India was not introduced into Java until 1850 - the Javanese preferred the more individual hand-drawn batiks known as tulis batiks. Printing blocks are said to have been used in India as long ago as 3,000 BC. There is evidence of printing in India during the fourth century BC, and also of the export of such fabric to China where they were admired and later imitated.

The trade between India and the East Indies was continued by the Portuguese and Dutch explorers who bartered Indian cloth for spices, and as a result of the colonisation of Java by the Dutch, in the seventeenth century, Javanese batiks were introduced into Holland, and thereafter to the rest of Europe. Nevertheless, because of the exotic designs, and time-consuming manner of production, the batiks were not immediately accepted by Europeans. Then, in the early nineteenth century, a full description of the processes and uses of batik was given by the Governor-General of Java, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (founder of Singapore and author of 'The History of Java' 1817), and this aroused interest in batik which, together with the wish to expand trade, led Holland and the United Kingdom to make an extensive study of the market. They investigated the methods and dyes used, and the best ways of producing imitation machine-prints to sell more cheaply than the comparatively expensive hand-printed originals.

DUTCH MECHANISATION

The first Dutch factory was established in Leyden in 1835, and factories in Rotterdam, Haarlem, Helmand and Appledorn followed in quick succession. Numbers of skilled craftsmen, brought to Holland from Indonesia, settled in specially built villages to teach the craft to Dutch workers. These Dutch workers practised in Holland, before going to the East Indies to supervise the co-ordination of individual and family workshops within large, state-controlled combines.

With the creation of a republic in Indonesia, the batik industry has been re-organised and attempts have been made to repair the damage it suffered during the Second World War. Co-operatives have been re-established under communal control, with government help and direction provided.

LAND AND PEOPLE

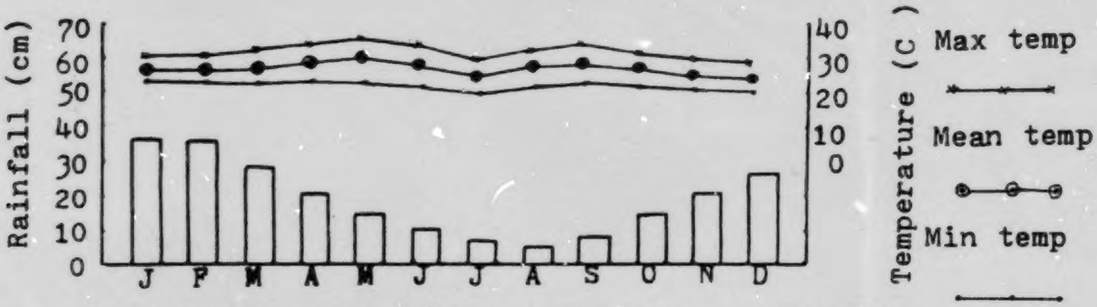
Indonesia is the group of islands situated south-east of the Asian continent. It is the sixth largest country in the world covering a land area of 735,000 square miles (1,904,345 sq Km), a surface area nearly eight times that of the United Kingdom. Of the 13,677 islands, 6,044 are inhabited - the population was estimated at 147 million in December 1980 (1). The islands used to be known as the Dutch East Indies and it was not until 1804 that a German explorer first called them Indonesia.

Population density varies considerably between the islands, being very high in Java, and sparse in some of the outerlying islands. 63.2% of the total population live on Java, 4,546,000 of whom live in the capital, Jakarta. Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population - over 90% of the people profess Islam as their religion, but only one third of them are Orthodox Muslims.

In 1949 Indonesia gained independence from the Dutch but it was not until 1969, when the United Nations officially recognised West Irian as part of Indonesia, that the nation took on its present form.

TOPOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

The major islands are characterised by rugged volcanic mountains, which are covered with dense tropical forests, and slope down to coastal plains often lying under thick alluvial swamps, and bordered by shallow seas and coral reefs. There are about 400 volcanoes, of which almost 130 are said to be active. Population is found to be strongly concentrated in regions of recent, or continuing, volcanic activity where the people stoically accept the danger in return for the rich agricultural land provided by lava flows. No other crop in the world will produce as much food per acre as the rice grown in the irrigated fields of Java's volcanic regions.



Mean monthly rainfall and temperature for Java.

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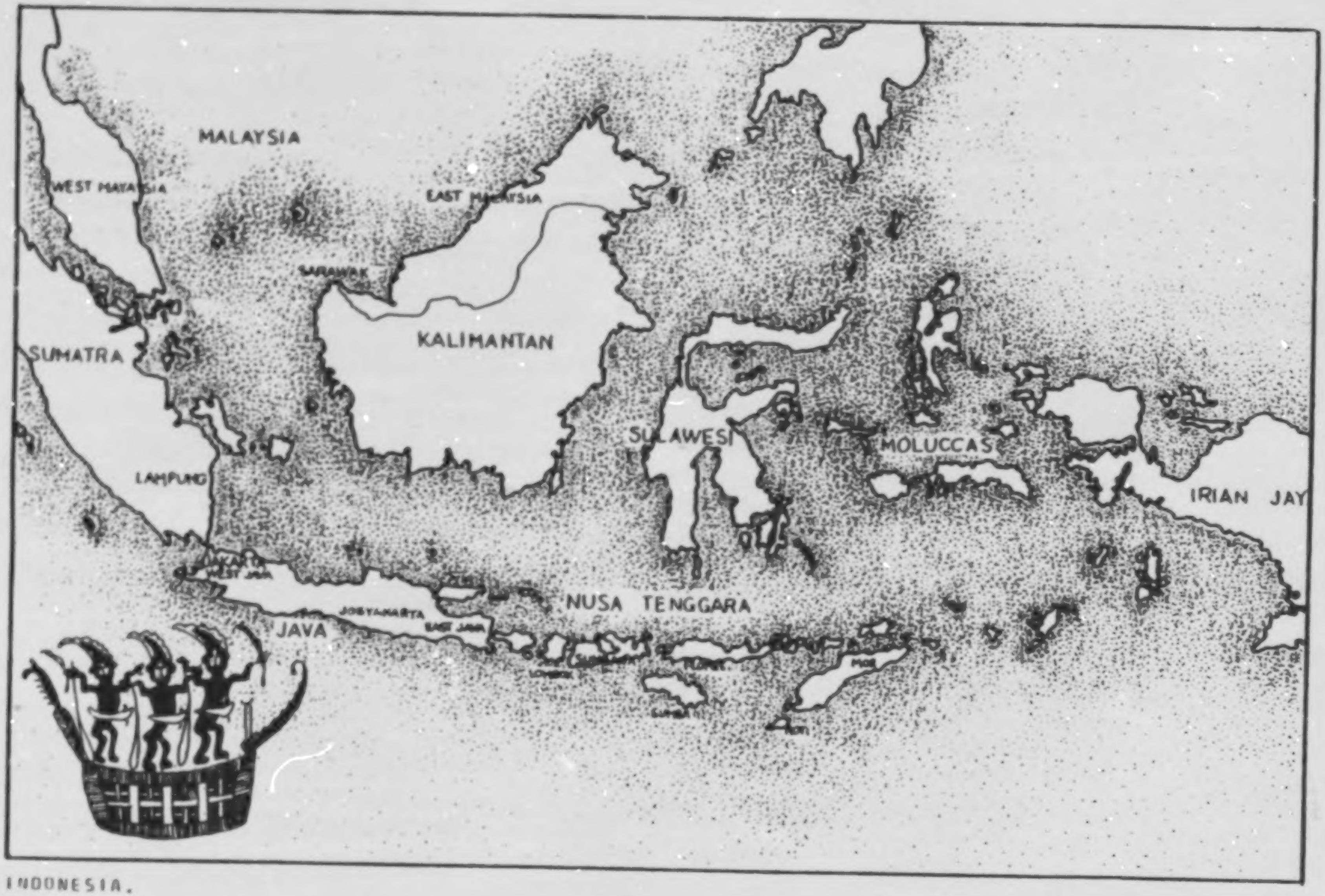
(1) All population figures, Lloyds Bank Economic Report February 1981.


MALAYSIA
WEST MALAYSIA
EAST MALAYSIA
SARAWAK
KALIMANTAN
SUMATRA
LAMPUNG
WEST JAVA
JOGYAKARTA
EAST JAVA
JAVA
SULAWESI
MOLUCCAS
IRIAN JAY
NUSA TENGGARA
LOMBOK

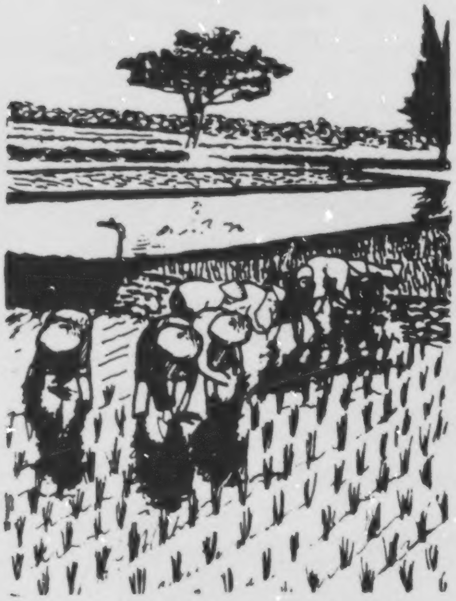
INDONESIA.

JAVA 4

The climate is strongly influenced by Indonesia's island structure, and its position on the Equator. Temperatures are uniformly high, and reach a maximum along the coast where the annual mean ranges from 74F (23C) to 88F (31C). Rainfall is more varied in extremes and distribution. Much of Indonesia receives heavy rainfall throughout the year, with the greatest amounts occuring between December and March. Moving eastwards across Java, the dry season, between June and October becomes progressively more pronounced.

Seasonal variation is due to Asian monsoonal airdrifts and the convergence of tropical air masses from both north and south of the Equator. Strong typhoons (tropical storms), which often occur in tropical latitudes are absent in Indonesia, but afternoon thunderstorms are common.

About 70% of the land is still covered with tropical rainforest. Mixed lowland and hill forest occurs between 5,000 feet (1,500 m) and is characterised by large numbers of high-canopied trees and woody, thick stemmed lianas (climbing plants). Above 5,000 feet this forest gives way to mountain evergreen rainforest.


RICE FIELDS IN JAVA.

Only 10% of the total land surface is devoted to agriculture, and intensive cultivation is restricted to Java, Bali, Lombok and certain areas of Sumatra and Sulawesi. More than 40% of cultivated land in Java is used for wet-rice cultivation, especially along the northern coastal plain and the extensive plains of central Java. Rice is the staple food for millions in South-East Asia, and is usually grown under water in flooded fields. In the drier, eastern part, such crops as corn, cassava and sweet potatoes are grown, and there are sugar, rubber, tea and coffee plantations.

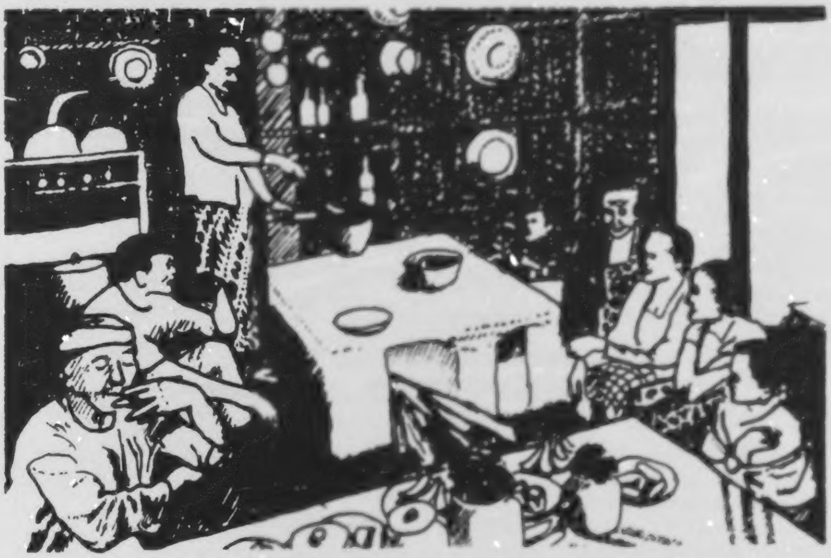
EXPORTS

Indonesia relies heavily on the export of such plantation crops, together with tin and other minerals, and petroleum products, of which it is the major producer in Asia.

The East Indies do not occupy the place in international trade that they held a century ago. Part of the reason is that many of the tropical crops, much sought after by temperate countries, were previously monopolised, whereas today they can be manufactured synthetically, or else are grown in other parts of the world. A hundred years ago exports provided a considerable revenue, but because of the massive increase in population, the Republic is now forced to import large quantities of food, and exports are in danger of falling behind imports.

On the island of Java, about 10% of the population live in cities like the capital Jakarta (4,546,000), Surabaya, a major port, (1,552,000) and Banding (1,200,000). These cities are great metropolitan areas wherein lie the major government, financial and business offices, and whose inhabitants lead western style lives. Other large cities, such as Pandang and Jogjakarta are centres of provincial, and regional government, and of local trade

Jogjakarta, which was the seat of the revolutionary government form 1945-9, is the seat of the ruling family of the Sultan, and there remains the centre of Javanese culture. It is in fact called the City of Batik.



JAVANESE FAMILY GATHERING.

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES

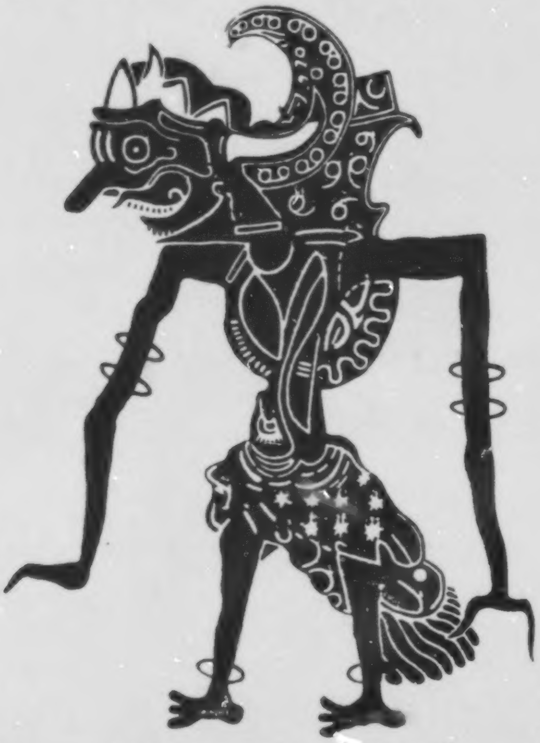
The remaining 90% of the population live in close-knit village communities. Despite the variety of linguistic, cultural and religious customs, values tend to be similar. Members of the community share responsibility for the common welfare and for public order, and in many parts they control land use and ownership; in irrigated areas particularly, there is much mutual exchange of labour. Overpopulation has led to a decrease in the size of the average farm and to an increase in the size of the landless rural group, who work as farm labourers or sharecroppers.

Houses are well separated and are normally made from frame and bamboo, with roofs of red tile or coconut fibre. Attached to the rear of one side of the house there will often be an enclosed cooking area, with a simple, brick stove. The floors, except in well-to-do houses, are of earth, packed hard and smooth.

Families of husband, wife and children tend to live alone, but they sometimes take in grandparents or unmarried brothers and sisters. The divorce rate among the Javanese is exceptionally high: one divorce for every two marriages registered. Each village has its own source of water, channelled through the centre, its mosque, its school and a network of earth-swept paths. There is little commercial activity because purchases are made from pedlars or from the market towns.

Villagers celebrate family occasions together. At ceremonies of marriage, birth, circumcisions, etc, the nights will be filled with gong music and people gather by their hundreds to watch shadow puppet shows or live dance dramas. Indonesian music, dancing and theatre remain completely traditional. The Krontjong, a kind of stringed instrument, introduced by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, is now so popular that it is almost a national music style. Wayang shadow plays, the oldest and most popular form of entertainment in Indonesia, have been very much influenced by Indian culture. Shadow plays originally represented portraits of deceased ancestors and the puppets function as receptacles for the spirits to enter.

The magic and religious significance of these puppets cannot be over-estimated - in their roles and appearance they symbolise human attributes. Dancing is highly developed and has religious associations. The movie industry, which until recently merely copied Hollywood, is now portraying the Indonesian way of life in its films.



WAYANG SHADOW PUPPET.

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HISTORY OF INDONESIA

In a country consisting entirely of islands, it is inevitable that the sea should play an important role in the making of Indonesian history. The sea facilitated communication, not only within the archipelago, but also within the rest of maritime Asia. However easy navigation did not result in the formation of territorially large kingdoms, since no single ruling group was large enough to overrun and occupy neighbouring territories, and individual islands were more concerned with protecting their own separate identity.

Records of foreign trade date back only to the early centuries AD, by which time Indonesia was trading with India and on the east coast of Africa; by the fifth century, regular voyages were being made between Indonesia and China.

INDIAN INFLUENCE

The contact with India caused many Indonesians to become interested in Indian thought, and Indian culture was brought to Indonesia by traders, by Brahmins, religious leaders, and by sacred literature. Indonesians quickly identified with the values of Hindu civilisation and the Buddhist and Hindu religions became dominant. However, the full rigours of the Hindu caste system had little appeal for Indonesians and therefore was not adopted. It was during this period that rice cultivation of irrigated fields spread extensively, and that two species of domesticated animals, the horse and the elephant, came to be used.

Broadly speaking, the Hindu period in Indonesia lasted from the first until the fourteenth century AD. The main starting places of cultural export were Southern India and the region of Gujarat in central India, both major trading areas at the time.

MUSLIM INFLUENCE

The second great influence on Indonesian history was the spread of the Muslim faith within the islands. The establishment of the first Muslim centres in Indonesia were probably a result of commercial circumstances. Trade is naturally accompanied by two-way human contact, and the effects of Islam were felt all along the Eastern trade routes.

By the early fifteenth century, the successful entrepot of Malacca was a main centre of Muslim faith and impulses spread inland from there. At first, the inland Javanese kingdoms resisted the new faith in favour of more deeply rooted religious traditions, but gradually they came to exist along side each other.

Today, Islam is the official religion of Indonesia although Hinduism still remains strong in Western Java, and on Bali.

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EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

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Portuguese explorers came to the East Indies in the sixteenth century, but their intervention in Java appears to have been unimportant. They survived chiefly as private traders and it was not until the arrival of the Dutch in the seventeenth century that attempts were made to control the trade carried on by indigenous Asian merchants. The Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC), was founded in 1602, and its commercial monopoly later formed the basis of the Dutch territorial empire.

Although at first, it may have wished to limit its activities to trade, the company was soon drawn into local politics in Java and elsewhere. In becoming the arbiter in dynastic disputes, or in conflicts between rival rulers, the Company inevitably emerged as the main political entity in the islands. In 1755, only a remnant of the old kingdom of Java survived, and this was divided into the two principalities of Jogjakarta and Surakarta. These principalities, each governed by a Sultan, survived until the end of Dutch rule in 1949.

The Dutch East India Company represented a new type of power in the Indies. It had, in effect, replaced the sovereign of the royal court, and in doing so, inherited the existing structure of authority. It formed a single organisation, traded across a vast area, possessed a superior military force, and in time, employed a bureaucracy of servants to look after its concerns in Indonesia. It could impose its will on other rulers and force them to accept its trading conditions. However, the VOC ran into so many financial difficulties that, in 1799, it wound up its affairs in Indonesia. The new Dutch government, appointed by Napoleon who had conquered The Netherlands five years earlier, continued to rule over the Indies, until they were forced to surrender to a force of the British East India Company. Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles was appointed Governor-General of Java, until the islands were returned to Dutch hands as part of the general settlement following the defeat of Napoleon.

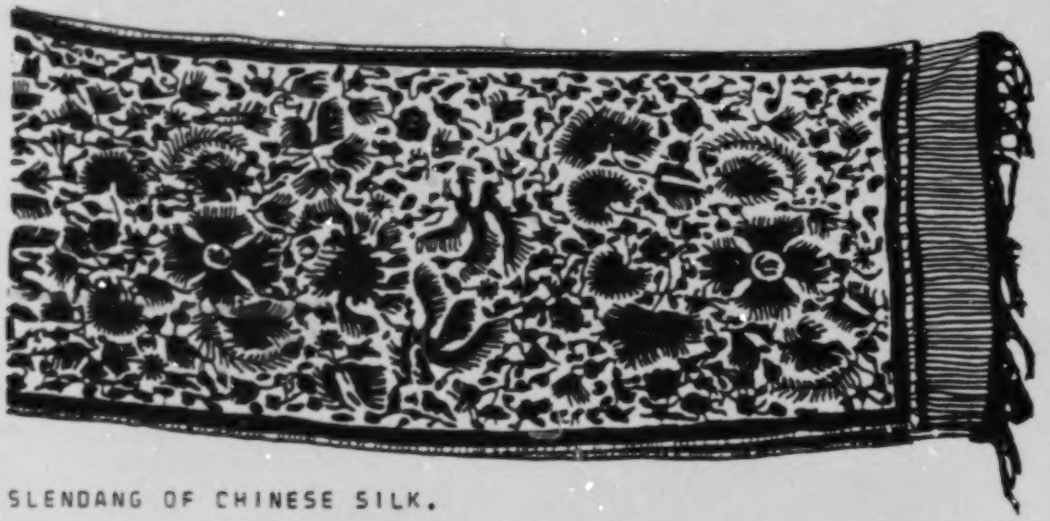
There ensued a period of increasing central control. Although there was opposition to the Dutch from within Indonesia, there rule remained unbroken until 1942 when Indonesia fell to Japan during World War Two. The Japanese found it necessary to use Indonesians in many administrative positions, and thus gave them more opportunities than had been allowed under the Dutch. After the Japanese surrender to the allies in 1945, the Indonesian Nationalist Party under the leadership of General Sukarno, proclaimed independence. Aperiod of revolution followed, and it was not until 1949 that Indonesian independence was finally recognised.

CLOTHING

Batiked textiles are used, above all, for clothing, both for festive occasions and for everyday wear. Although many Indonesian people now wear western-style clothes, traditional dress still survives in villages, and is always worn for ceremonial activities.

Since the textiles are woven on looms of limited width, many garments are composed of a number of panels. A frequent exception to this is the slendang (shoulder cloth) which often consists of a single panel.

The shorter ones, folded over the right shoulder to the left hip, are worn as part of women's formal dress, whereas the longer ones are used as slings for carrying babies.



SLENDANG OF CHINESE SILK.

Batiked cloths are always rectangular in shape, and are wrapped around the body in many different ways. Women's skirts are held in position by a variety of knots, folds, pleats or belts.

One example of such a cloth is a sarong, a loin, or hip-cloth worn by both men and women. A piece of material, usually slightly larger than one yard by two yards is used. It consists in the main of a central area called the kapala (the head), and is flanked by two other large areas (badans). The kapala contains two rows of tumpals, framed by narrow borders. The patterning on each badan of a sarong may be different to allow the garment to be worn in different ways at various times of the day. Such cloths are known as 'pagi-sore cloths', or 'morning-afternoon cloths'.

In central Java today it is mainly worn by men, who in addition wrap it around their shoulders as a mantle or draw it over their head as protection against the cold. It is also frequently used as a sleeping cloth.

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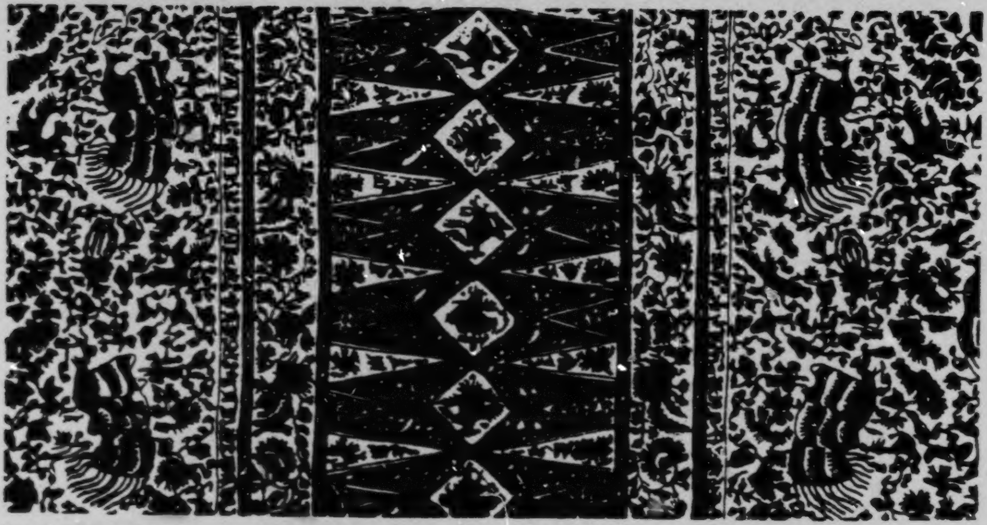

SARONG WITH DIVISION INTO KAPALA.

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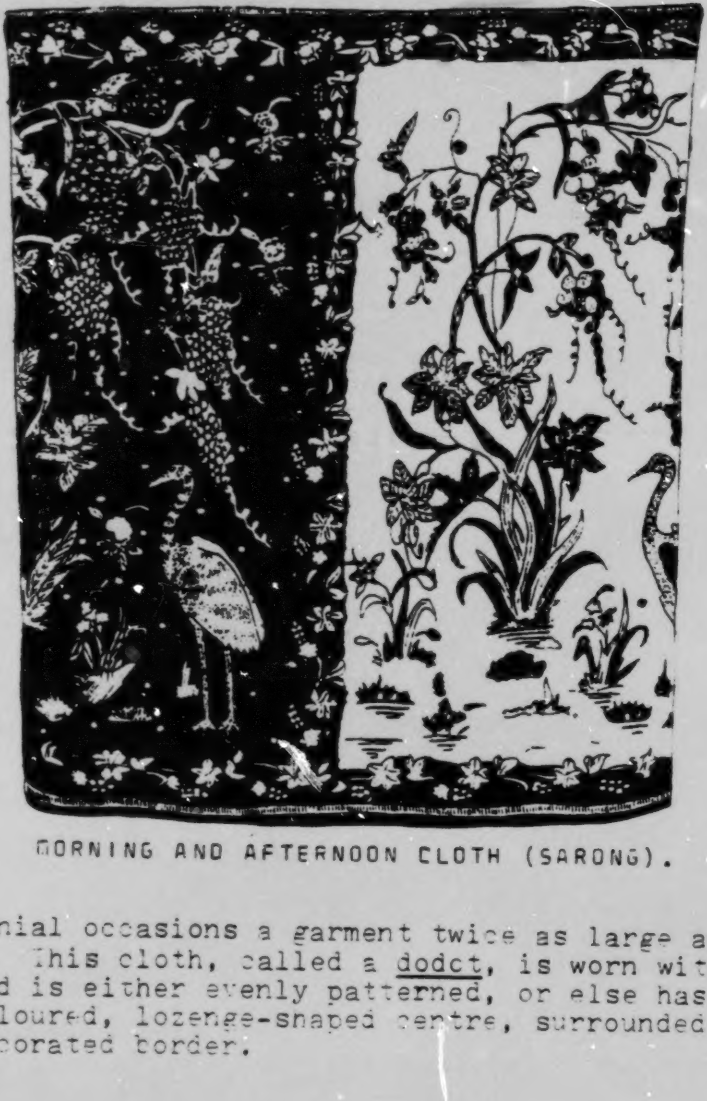
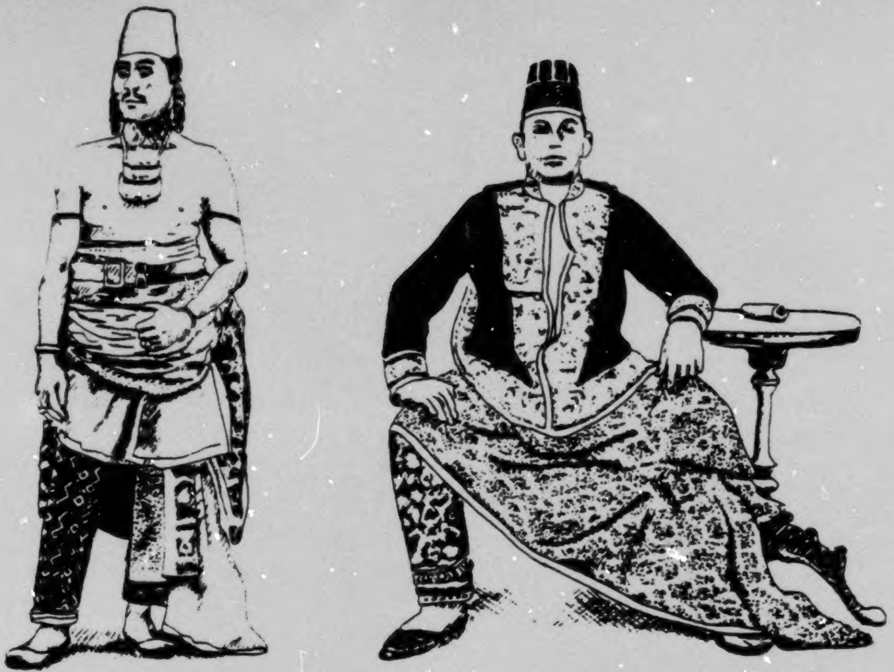
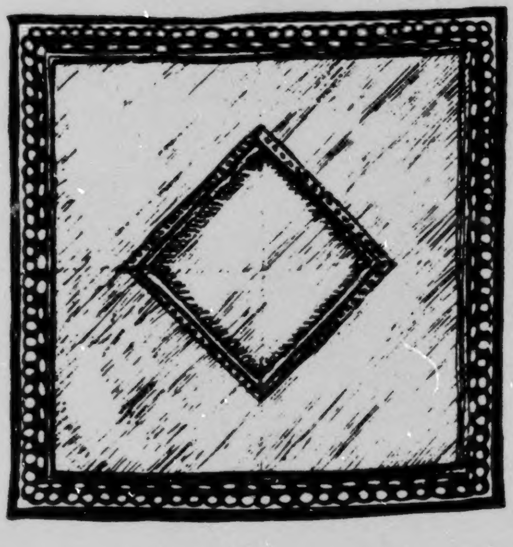


MORNING AND AFTERNOON CLOTH (SARONG).

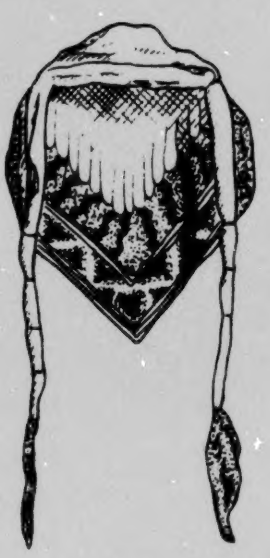
On ceremonial occasions a garment twice as large as a sarong is worn. This cloth, called a dodct, is worn with a long train, and is either evenly patterned, or else has a large, single coloured, lozenge-shaped centre, surrounded by a richly decorated border.



TWO PRINCES WEARING COURT CLOTHES. DODOTS.



HEAD SQUARE KAIN KAPALA.



WARRIORS HAT.

A kain kapala is a large cotton headsquare worn by the menfolk, which is decorated around the sides, but has a plain square centrepiece. It is wound around the head, then removed and starched to hold its shape. At one time, each area of Java, and many of Indonesia's coastal areas, had its own distinctive way of folding the headcloth. Nowadays, the pici, a black velvet cap, popularised by the former President Sukarno, as a sign of nationalism, has largely replaced the coloured headcloth.

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USE OF BATIKED TEXTILES

Batiked textiles are not merely used for clothing. Textiles can be used for gifts, home decoration, dance costumes, shrouds, trading items, and play significant roles in important ceremonies. Certain batik patterns are reserved for use at weddings, others have special religious and magical significance and their presence at ceremonies is considered vital.

As in many societies, Javanese ceremonies and rituals are frequently connected with changes in the status of a person within the social structure. The birth, or death of a villager, a marriage ceremony, a circumcision or tooth filing ritual which ushers children into adulthood, are all important life crisis events.

In the marriage ceremony the exchange of textiles symbolises the productive qualities of bride givers, (textiles are seen as being part of a bride's dowry), as well as having real value as the product of labour. In traditional societies, economic factors of labour, materials and skills were limited primarily to members of a family, therefore the gift of textiles came to represent the economic wealth controlled by the family. Thus, the more aristocratic the family, the larger the number of fine cloths involved in the exchange.

One custom revolving around a marriage concerns the ceremonial bath taken by the bride and groom before the ceremony. The plain white garments worn at this bath of purification and renewal were subsequently batiked with identical designs. These textiles were afterwards held in particular veneration by the married couple. The parallel of the transition of bride and groom to the married state, and the cloths from unpatterned to a common pattern, could only evolve in a society in which costume and textiles play such a special role.

The Javanese, ever aware of connotations of designs, are especially careful when selecting batik textiles as gifts or as costumes for ceremonial gatherings. They avoid those with names that might bode ill for the future, and favour a good sign such as bandji, which because it represents abundance, conveys a wish for wealth and a long life. Slanting designs are also considered fortunate and appear on the formal dress of a bride and groom.

Rich men collected textiles for the day of their funeral, when huge numbers of cloths would be required as gifts, and to wrap the corpse into a gigantic formless bundle. These coverings would be buried with the dead man so that they could accompany him to after-life.

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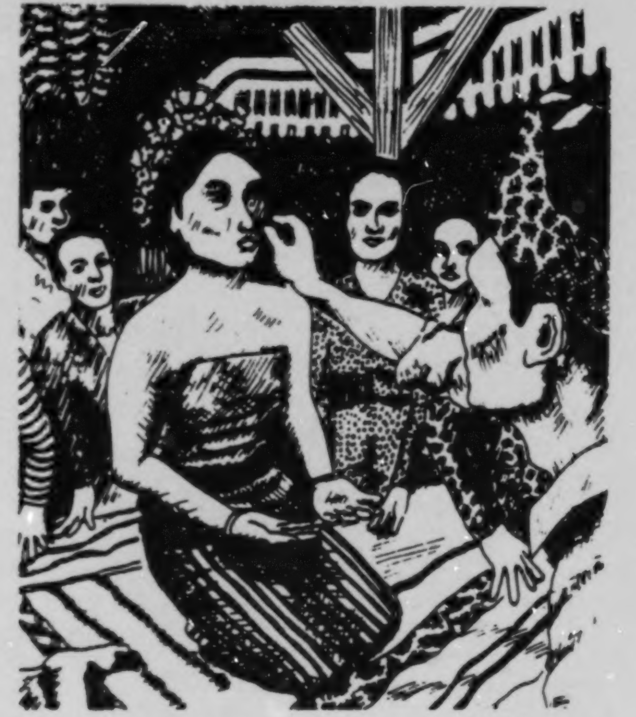
In many regions, textiles reflect the divisions within society, and in particular the concept of the dualism of nature. Indonesians envisage the cosmos as being divided into male and female elements. Textiles, possibly because they are the product of women's labour, are widely classified as being female. Weapons, on the other hand represent the male element, and when the two are combined, as in a flag (the weapon being the long stick), they become a symbol of the universe as a whole.

The degree to which the Javanese value batik can be seen in the way that a good piece is kept within the family for generations, and is regarded as being a precious family heirloom. It is kept safe and is seldom worn, and in times of need can be sold or pawned.



IN PREPARATION FOR A TOOTH FILING CEREMONY
A YOUNG GIRL IN CEREMONIAL DRESS HAS A
GOLD RING RUBBED ON HER LIPS.

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SYMBOLS

Javanese batik is the richest and most complex of all wax-resist textiles. There are thousands of batik patterns and new ones are being designed all the time. Original designs have been preserved and a definite tradition has been established through their reproduction by successive generations, and a whole series of typical patterns has been formed to which artists always refer for the composition of their design. In spite of the flexibility of expression allowed by a drawn line of wax, traditional canting batiks were created according to certain prinicples and formerly possessed social significance. Nowadays, although few artists attach much importance to the original meanings of designs, they still provide material for an interesting study.

There are two main regions of batik production in Java: the north coast towns of Ceribon, Pekalangan, Semarang and Lasen, and the Central Javanese towns of Jogjakarta and Surakarta. Although the two areas share much design inventory, certain, easily recognisable differences in style remain. For example, the brightly coloured north-coast cloths show a distinct Chinese and Japanese influence and include many curvilinear motifs such as birds, plants and fantasy animals. These coastal areas were sufficiently distant from Central Java to escape the conservative impact of the courts of Jogjakarta and Surakarta, yet significantly located on the exotic trade routes. Chinese, Indian, Arab and, finally, European traders all settled in the towns along the coast. The Chinese brought many painted and glazed ceramics, and embroidered and painted textiles, the designs of which quickly became motifs for batik art. Chinese influence can be seen in cloud and meander formations, and in certain isolated motifs such as the phoenix in loktjuans. Loktjuans (the word is said to be derived from the Chinese 'lo' meaning silk, and 'tjuan' meaning blue), are slendangs of Chinese silk made on the north-coast and in Central Java.

The cloths of central Java are of a more sombre hue. Blues and browns tend to dominate the surface with only small touches of white relief. In Central Java, which Indonesians consider to be the centre of traditional batik production, cloths are usually grouped according to their designs. There is a general division between geometric and non-geometric designs.

CEPLOKKANS are the largest group. The word ceplok originally denoted a piece of decorated metal work in the form of a star, cross or rosette. In batik terminology the word refers to the geometric division of the surface area of the cloth into squares, rhomboids, circles, stars, etc, which in turn are usually decorated with stylised flowers, leaves and animal figures. An interesting feature of the designs is that they are drawn as seen from above. Patterns are based on acute observation of local flora and fauna.

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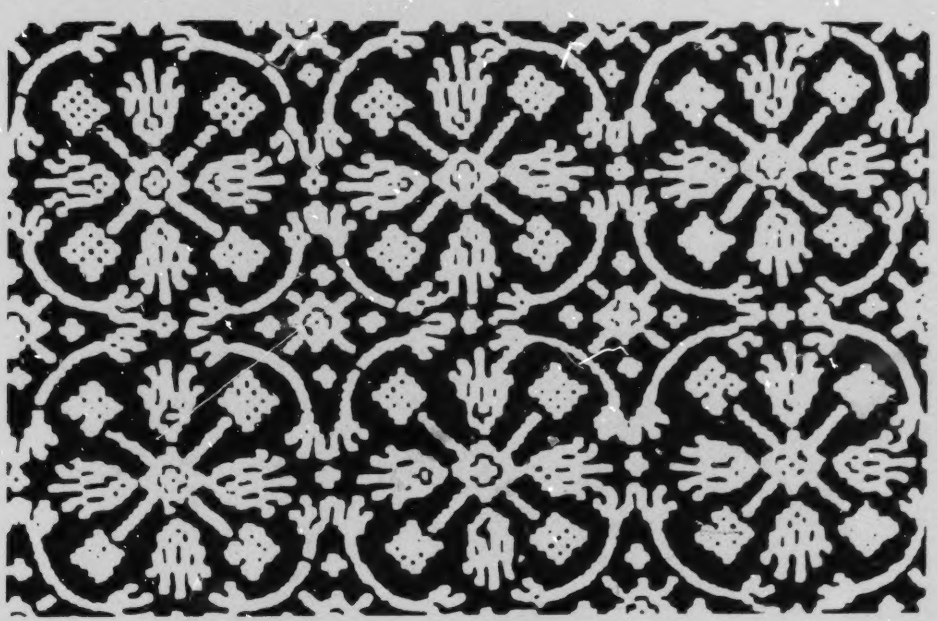
The influence of imported India cloths can be discerned in ceplokkan designs. The surface division of most batiks are similar to Indian patola cloths and certain motifs, such as the djelamprang, are copied directly from Indian fabrics. In its basic form it consists of rows of circles just touching one another, the circles being filled with rosettes, stars, etc. This motif is supposed to have been reserved by the Sultan of Jogjakarta for his exclusive use, and that of his children.



DJELAMPRANG MOTIF.

Perhaps the most easily recognisable of the ceplokkans are the tumpals. This design is usually two rows of isosceles triangles placed point to point. This is a very ancient motif found in barkcloth, stone and wood carvings, and paintings all over India and South East Asia. As a symbol, the tumpal seems to have been related to growth and fertility. The tumpals form a broad strip across the cloth called the kapala, or head of the cloth. The main body of a batik cloth is called the field.

Related to the djelamprang motif is the kawung motif. This design consists of circles placed in a row, in such a way that they overlap instead of just touching. The kawung design has been associated with the leaves and fruit of the aren palm, or the oval fruit of the kapok tree, and recently it has been suggested that the word kawung refers to cotton. At one time these natural objects were all important to life in Java. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the fermented sap of the aren palm was made into an alcoholic beverage which was important to the economy. The cotton bush entered the mythology of the period, and was venerated in a similar way to the rice plant. Cotton appears as a symbol for clothing on the Indonesian coat of arms.

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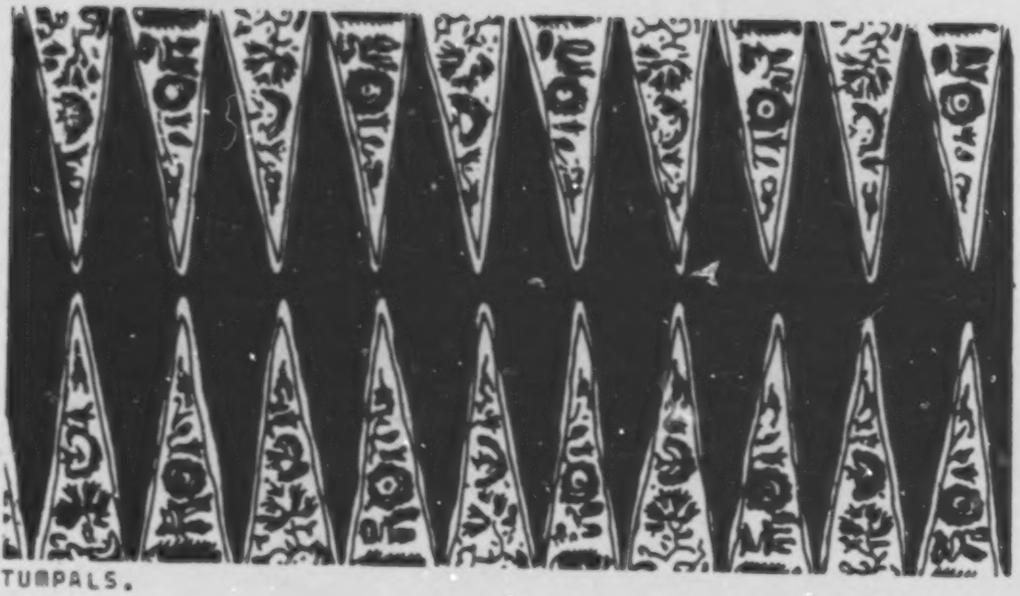
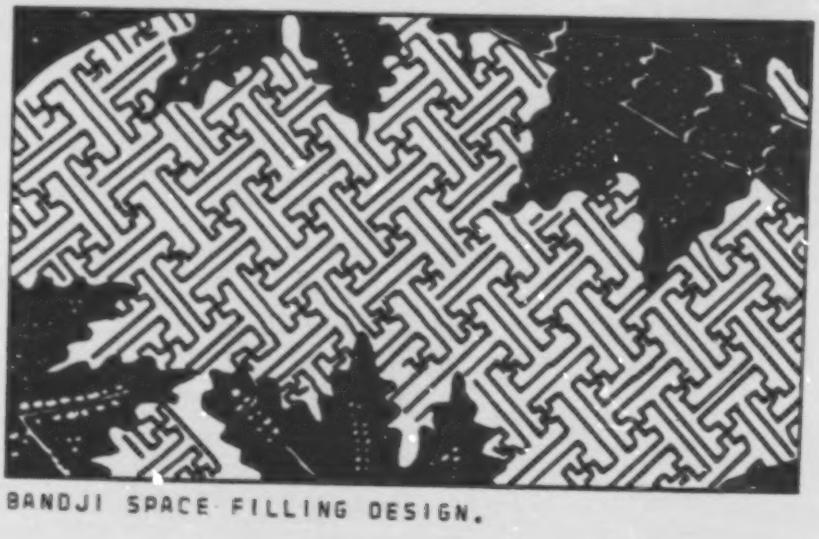


TUMPALS.

Space-filling designs, known as bandji, often consist of inter-connecting swastikas which is a symbol common to many countries. In the Bronze-Age Art of ancient China it symbolised the rotation of celestial bodies, whereas now it is more specifically a symbol of the sun, and has in general, become a sign of good luck.



BANDJI SPACE FILLING DESIGN.

The second type of signs is known as CARISMIRING. These signs are characterised by the division of the surface into diagonal bands of decoration. However, although the bands run diagonally the motifs are always positioned vertically.

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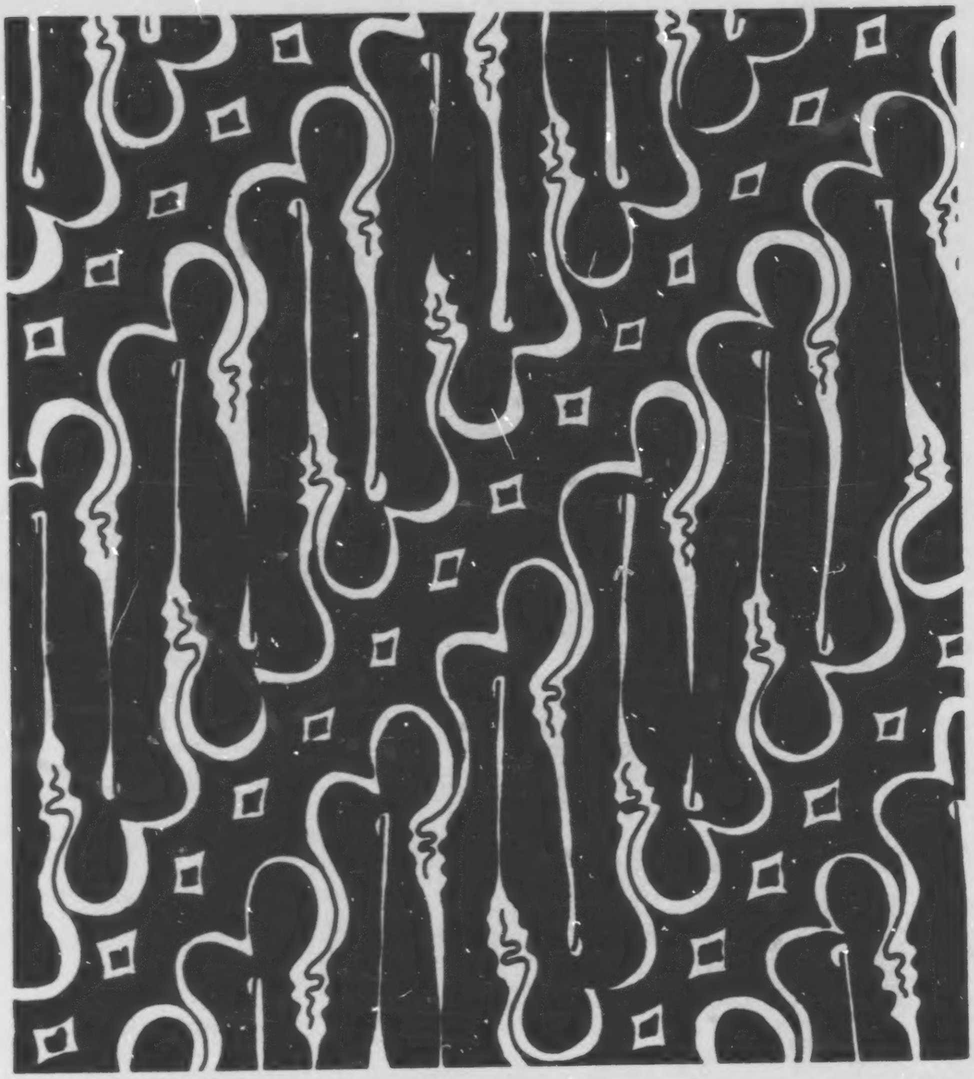
The parang designs fall into this classification, the most famous of these being the parang rusak, which can appear in various forms. Its origin and symbolism is the subject of much controversy and discussion, and it is consequently one of the most interesting of the designs. There are several theories as to its origin, some deriving it from the frigate bird (1) of New Guinea, others from vines, stylized knives or daggers, or even arrow heads.



PARANG RUSAK DESIGN.

Until the early part of the twentieth century, certain designs were considered to be "forbidden", and could only be worn by royalty, high court officials, court dancers, or a bride and groom. Forbidden designs, in the main, were

(1) a large tropical sea bird

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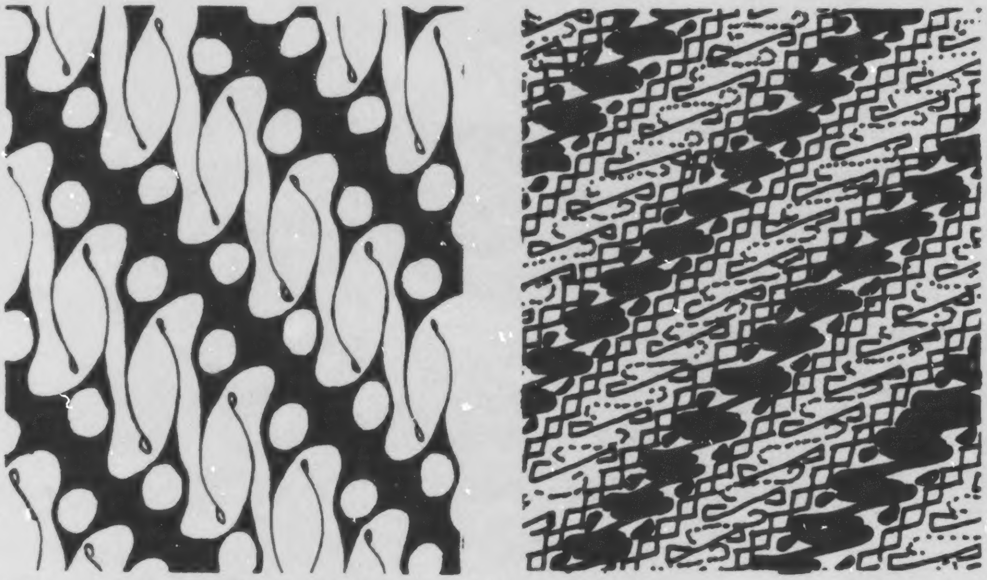
slanting designs such as the parang rusak, kawung and djelamparang. As a result it is easy to see the value of slanting designs as a mark of high position, for they provide immediate recognition. These forbidden designs had to be faultlessly executed; no bleeding of colour through the cracks in the wax was permitted as this would constitute a flaw, destroying the magic power with which the cloth was believed to be charged. From a court point of view, restricted patterns were appropriate only for a sacred and divine king, and therefore had extraordinary power, meaning and feeling.



TWO VARIATIONS OF PARANG RUSAK.

The third group, the SEMEN patterns, consist of non-geometric designs in which the decorative motifs are loosely arranged, although in a certain repetitive manner. The word semen means to sprout, and refers to the frequent use of leaf-like tendrils as filling or background elements. It has been suggested that the floral and tendril ornamentation of semen may symbolise a contemporary version of the Tree of Life.

In the Old Testament two trees are mentioned, but whereas the West adopted the Tree of Knowledge, the East took the Tree of Life from its own legends. It was believed to bear fruits which conveyed eternal life.

The semen pattern may consist of foliage, flowers, animals, various conventionalised objects (clouds, mountains, boats, crowns, etc.) and mythical figures of the Wayang shadow-play. A very characteristic feature of the semen group is the wing or 'lar' motif, which occurs singly or in pairs, and always combined with other designs. The ordinary wings (singly or in pairs) are called mirong, while the wings combined with a broad, extended tail are named sawat. The sawat design

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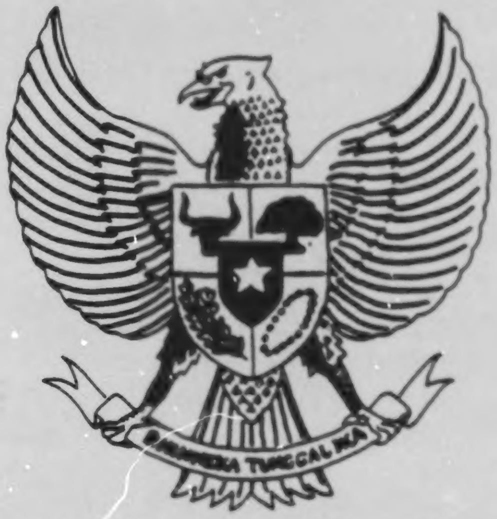
represents the great eagle, the Garuda, the mythical bird carrier of Vishnu. Birds are an important symbol throughout the world; because of its connotations of power and success, the Garuda has become the national symbol of Indonesia.



JAVA'S NATIONAL SYMBOL.'THE GARUDA BIRD'.

The Javanese give a separate name to each form of semen pattern. The name given to a pattern refers to the dominant motif, which may represent plants, flowers, or animals, and in other cases can indicate the background colour of the cloth. Many of the names are extremely evocative, eg, 'little bird in love', 'lingering moonlight' and 'air and clouds'.

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

Some very old religious symbols appear to have been incorporated into Javanese batik designs. These include the three-branched Tree of Life, emerging from the top of Mount Meru, which plays an important part in the Wayang shadow-plays. Also represented is the legendary Ship of the Dead. The belief in the voyage of the ghost, or the spirit of someone deceased, being carried to the other world in a Ship of The Dead, has survived to this day, and is important in its connection with funeral rites and customs. Cloths bearing the motif of the Ship of the Dead were buried with the body to help guide the corpse from this world to the next. However, having undergone many changes and transformations, the original motif has lost much of its significance and has been degraded to a conventional pattern on Indonesian fabrics.

The human body very rarely appears as a motif except in a very stylized form. This is largely due to Islamic law which forbids the portrayal of living beings. Man usually appears in the shape of a Wayang shadow-puppet, but there are instances when a batik textile is decorated with scenes from everyday life. In these cases the prohibition seems to be relaxed.

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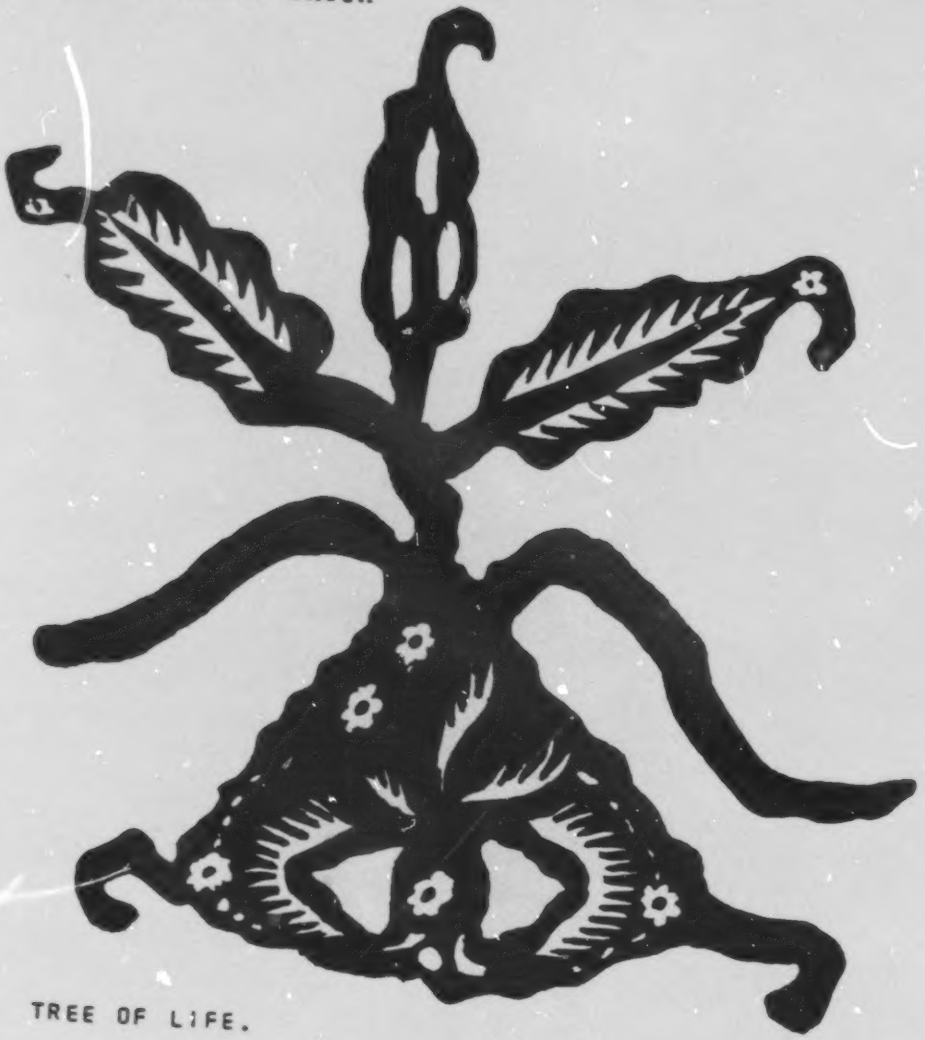
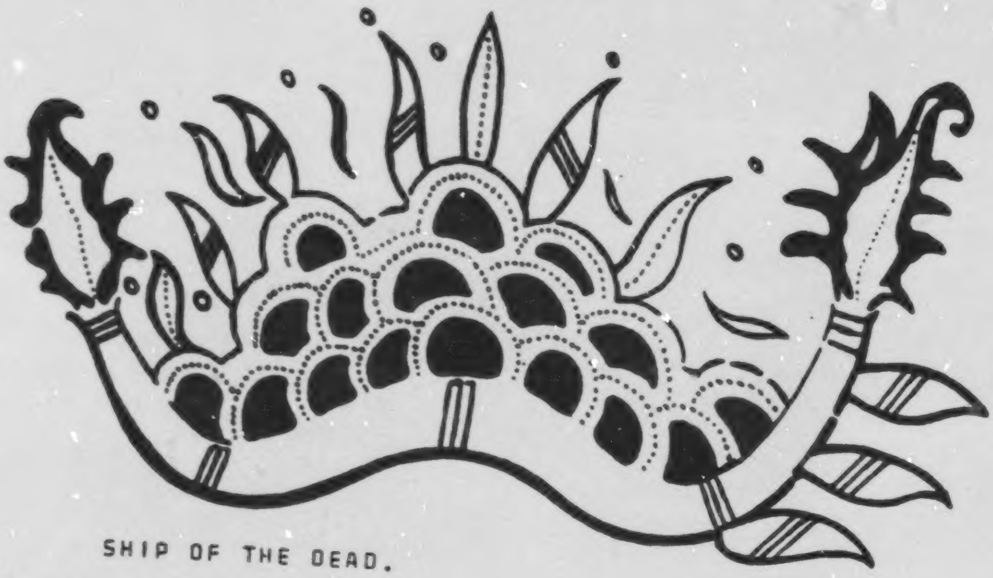
SYMBOLS FROM JAVANESE BATIK



TREE OF LIFE.



SHIP OF THE DEAD.

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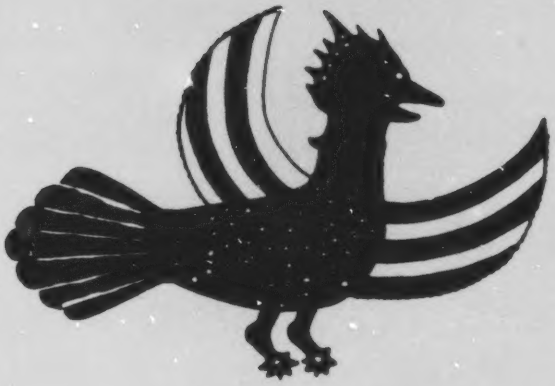
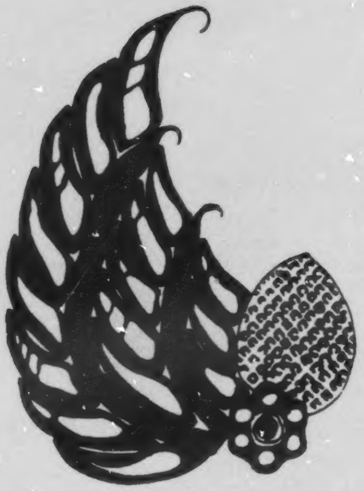
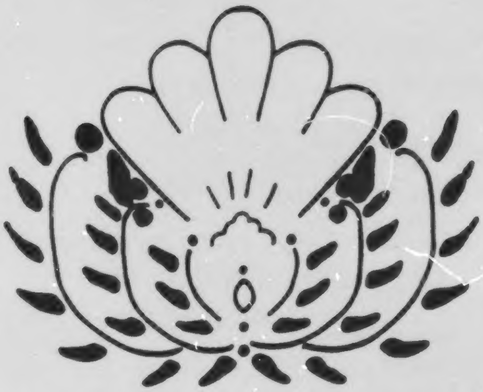


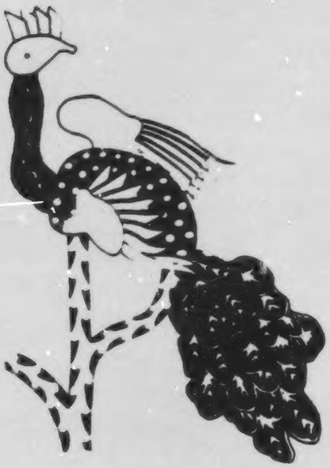
GARUDA BIRD.



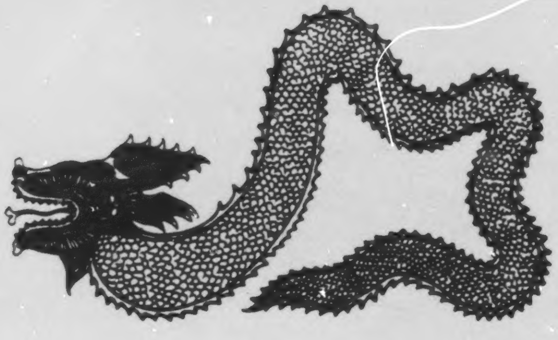
WING OR LAR MOTIF.



SAWAT, STYLISED GARUDA BIRD.

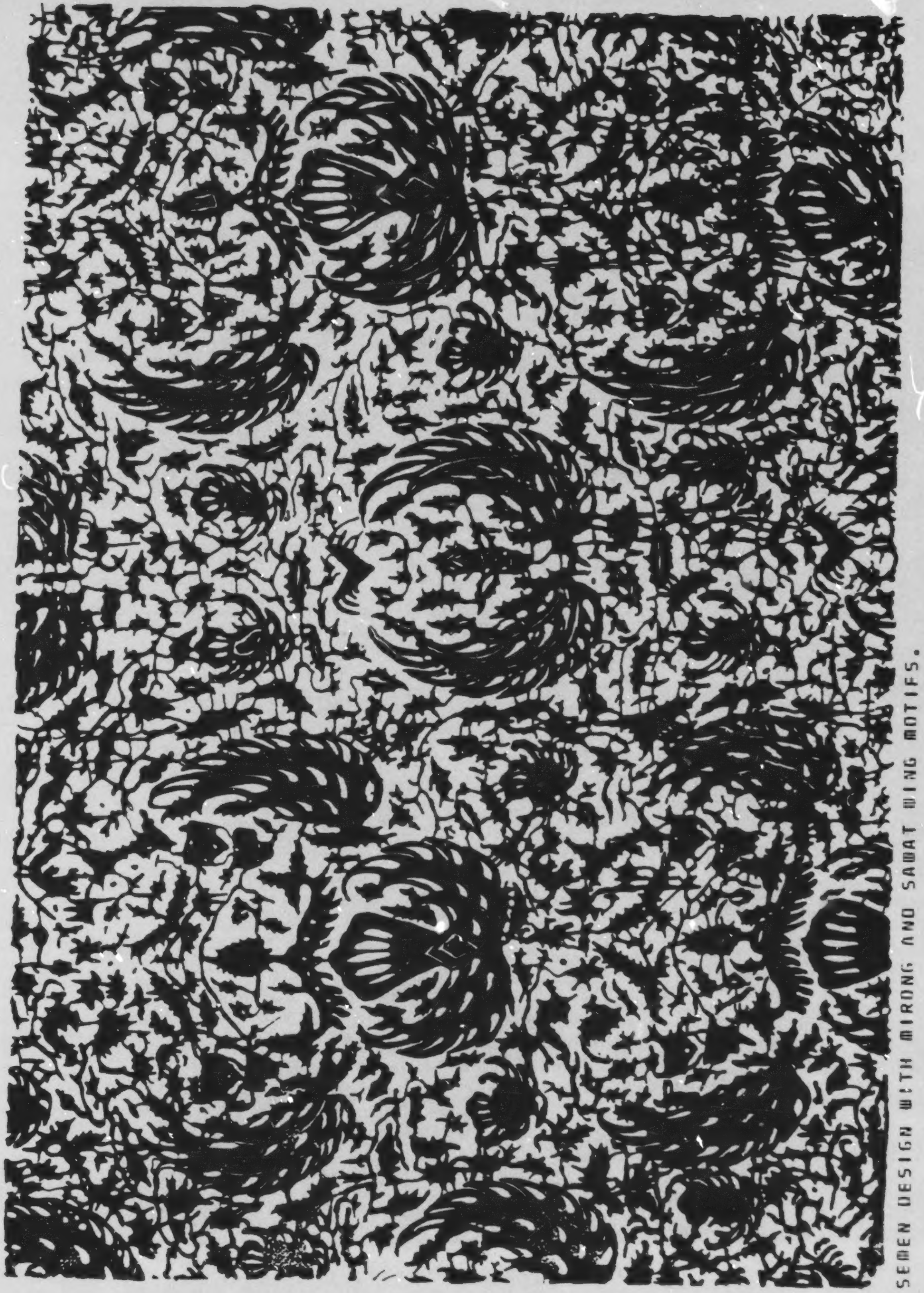


PEACOCK.



SNAKE OR NAGA.

JAVA 23



SEMEN DESIGN WITH MIRONG AND SAWAT WING MOTIFS.

ORIGINS OF BATIK

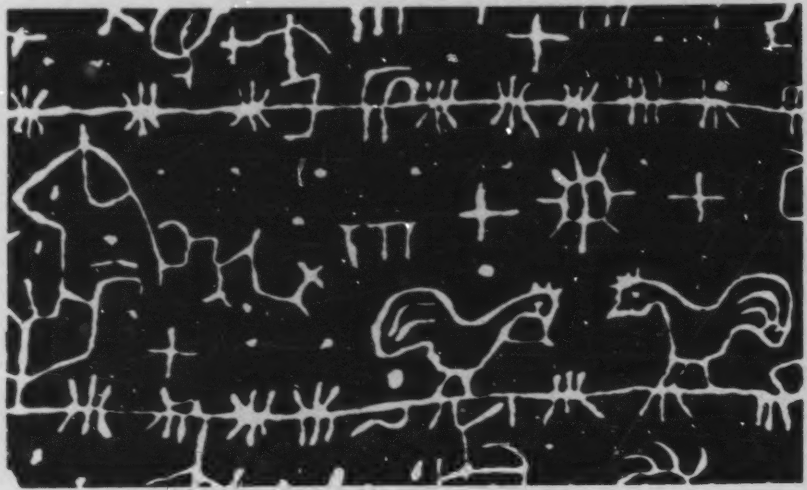
Batik is a Javanese word denoting a certain method of applying coloured patterns or designs to finished fabrics. That part of the design which is to remain free of dye is carefully covered or 'reserved' in order to protect it from contact with the dye. The substance used for reserving or covering, usually liquid wax, is called the resist.

There is no certain information as to the exact place of origin of the batik process, or when it was first practised, and it may well have arisen independently in various parts of the world. Although batik work was found in South-East Asia, India, Africa and South America, the craft reached its highest development in Indonesia, and particularly on the island of Java. In fact, when speaking of batik, people usually have in mind the ornamented cloths of Java.

In the thirteenth century batik was merely a pastime for aristocratic ladies, but afterwards it spread throughout the court, and was eventually used to decorate the national costume worn by men and women all over the islands, and provided material for a thriving export trade.

Starch was used as the fore-runner to wax as a resist. In Indonesia this was usually made from flour obtained from rice grain. On such cloths the designs are fairly crude since finer starch lines would not stick sufficiently to the cloth.

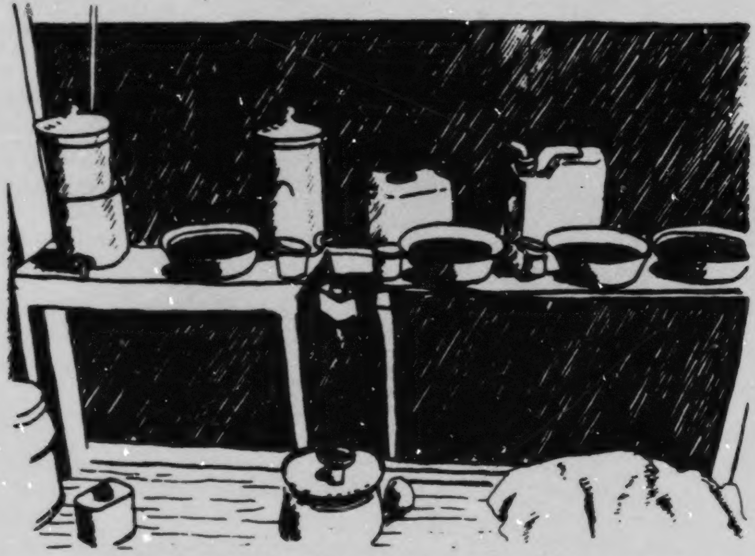
Another primitive method, which is still practised to this day by the Toradja tribes of Central Celebes, involves the application of wax by means of a flat-ended strip of bamboo These cloths are usually monochrome, the pattern being white on a dark blue background.



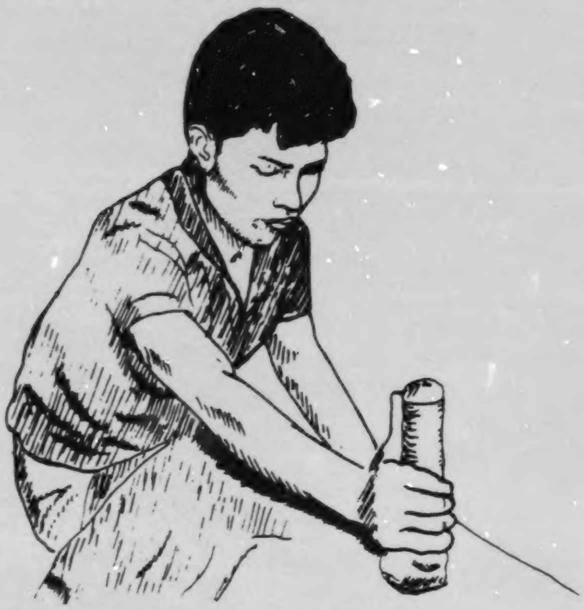
STARCH RESIST FABRIC FROM JAVA.

PROCESS

Although cotton can be grown successfully in Indonesia, that which is most often used is imported from India. Firstly the cloth is washed several times to remove starch, chalk, etc. The material is then soaked in coconut oil and dried in the sun. The edges are hemmed, and the cloth is once again starched in order to prevent the wax from flowing too easily. After the cloth has been dried, it is then pounded with a wooden mallet or a stone, to make it smooth and supple. This process, which is done by men, may take up to six weeks.

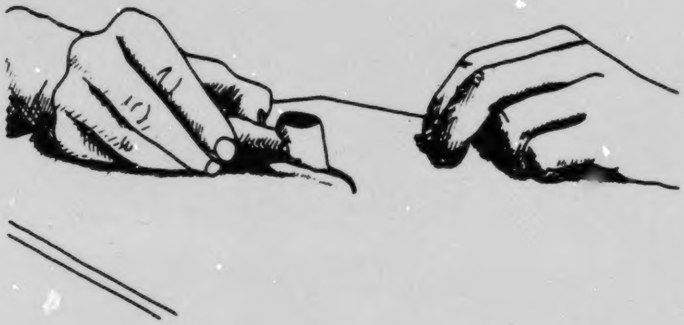


DYEING WORKSHOP WITH DYES AND ACCESSORIES.



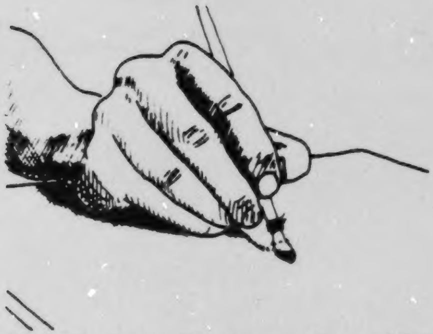
POUNDING FABRIC IN PREPARATION FOR DYEING

The first outline is sketched with charcoal and then the cloth is hung over a wooden or bamboo rack, ready for the first waxing, which is applied by women, unless a cap block is to be used. The wax was formerly beeswax and later a cheaper European wax called ozocerite, but now it is usually a locally produced paraffin wax. The wax is prepared in an earthenware or metal container, and it's temperature is kept as even as possible; it is important to avoid overheating the wax, as it easily discolours and produces pungent fumes. The characteristic perfume associated with Indonesian batik is obtained by adding tinctures from natural barks to the wax.



LINEAR DESIGNS DRAWN WITH CANTING.

The first operation is to cover with liquid wax all those parts of the pattern that are not to be dyed in the first colour used. As soon as one side of the fabric has been reserved, it is turned over and hung over the rack, facing the sun, in order to be waxed on the back. This is a highly skilled operation, and unless it is carried out to match exactly the pattern on the front, the dye will either creep into the fabric from behind the first waxing, or an imperfect and double print will ensue. As a result there is no right or wrong side to the material.



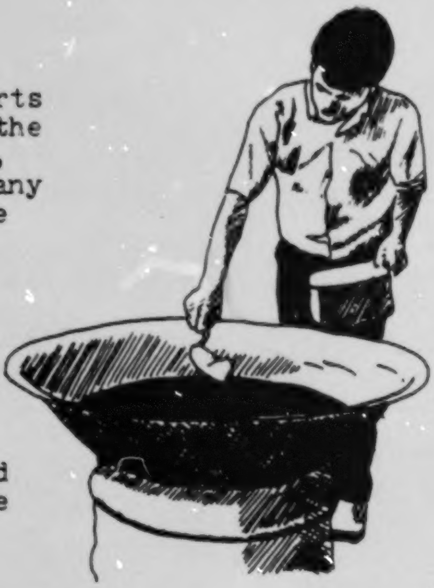
AREAS FILLED IN WITH COTTON FIBRE WAD TIED TO A STICK.

When the old family craft was adapted to a cottage industry by the Dutch colonists, and subsequently by the Indonesian authorities, the need for quicker methods of production forced the workers to allocate the relatively simple task of background filling to beginners, and to reserve the more skilled workers for the intricate details.

After the wax on the cloth has been solidified by immersion in cold water, the material is then plunged into a dye vat, which is cold or tepid according to the colour being used. The dye takes everywhere except on those parts covered by wax.

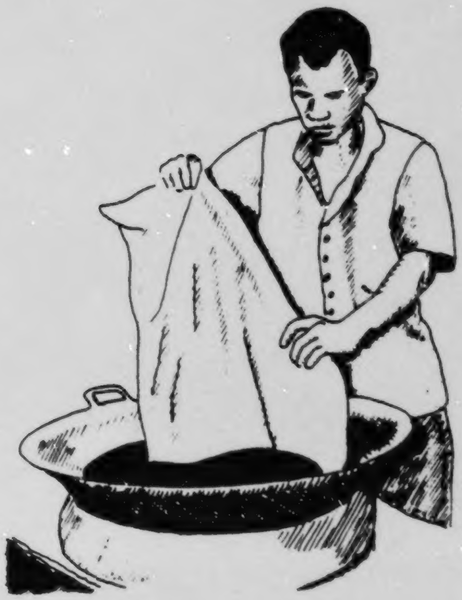
Following this the fabric is starched once again so that the second covering of wax will not spread and become soft. The parts that are not to be stained with the second colour are covered in wax, and the process is repeated as many times as there are colours in the batik.

If only a small part of the fabric is to absorb the second colour, there is no need to remove all the first wax-covering. Instead the wax that covers the details to be coloured is scraped away and new wax applied to those parts that received the first colour.



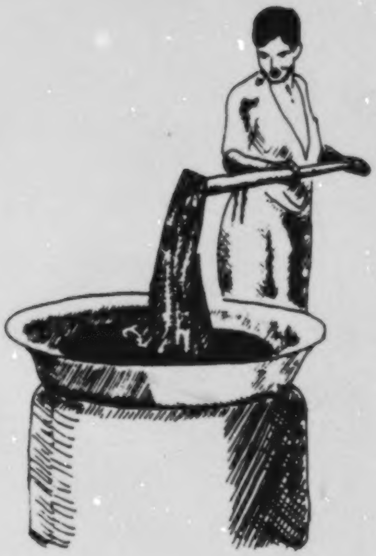
MIXING DYES.

The dyeing is carried out by men, who also used to prepare the dyes. Dyeing with indigo usually started early in the morning and involved a series of long soakings and oxidations in the open air, repeated again and again until the required depth of shade was obtained.



DYEING FABRIC.

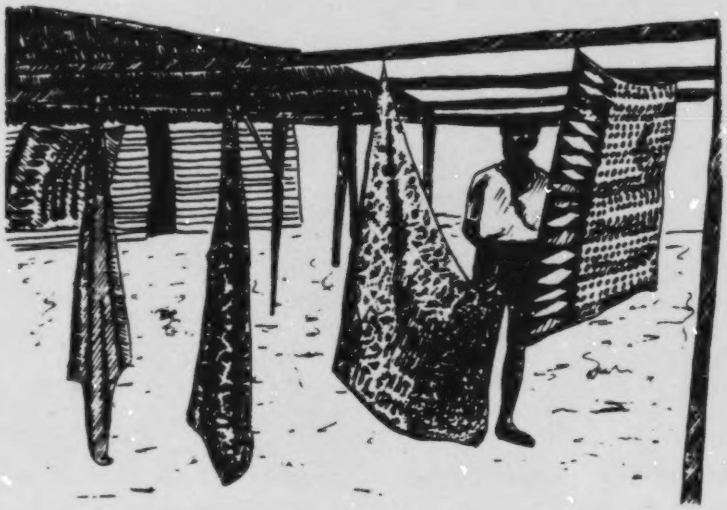
Dyeing may even take several months of work and waiting before the desired rich colours are achieved. In some cases, several years can pass between the various dye baths, with a new colour being added each year. A textile made in such a manner may serve as a ceremonial garment for many generations, or it may be included as part of a burial gift.



BOILING WAX OUT OF DYED FABRIC.

To Western eyes, the characteristic veining quality produced by the innumerable, fine, hair-line cracks that appear if the wax is too brittle is one of the charms of batik. However in Java this is not so, and such 'crackling' is considered evidence of faulty workmanship.

A Surakarta batik designer, R.T. Hardjonogorno, recalls the sight of hundreds of women, who were working for his grandfather, dressed neatly in jackets and batik skirt cloths, wearing jewellery such as the large traditional ear plugs. They would sit cross-legged or with their legs folded under them, chanting time-honoured melodies while they worked. The scrape-and-wash workers would hum narrative and mood songs from the shadow plays, in time to the tapping of their resonant rhythms.

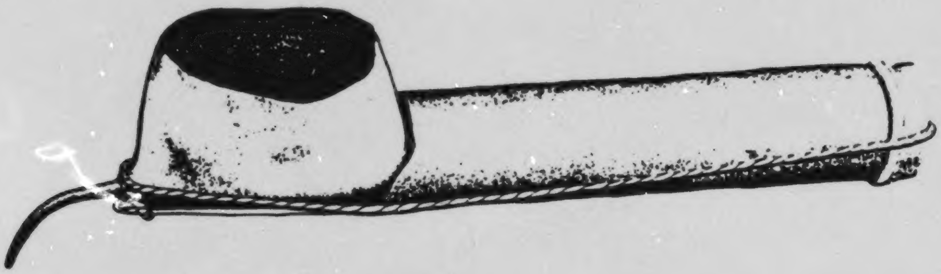


HANGING DYED FABRICS TO DRY.

IMPLEMENTS

The Canting

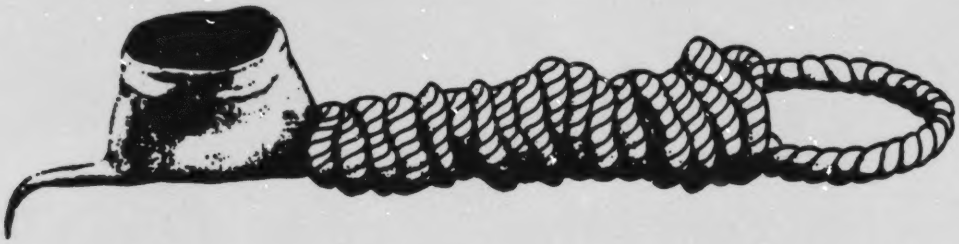
This is an elaborate instrument, and was originally to be found only in Java. Using this implement it is possible to apply a continuous line of wax to the cloth; moreover, this line can be made so thin that detailed designs can be made.



ORIGINAL JAVANESE CANTING.

The canting is a small copper cup, with one or more thin, tubular spouts, and a bamboo or reed handle. The number of spouts and their diameters may vary considerably. For drawing the outline, a canting with a very slender spout is used, which forms a wax stroke about one twenty-fifth of an inch wide. For drawing designs made up of a number of dots or lines at even distances, cantings with as many as seven spouts are used. To cover small spaces, a cup with a broader spout is suitable. Larger spaces are filled with a crude brush which is obtained by fastening a wad of cotton to the mouth of the canting.

A fabric produced entirely with a canting is called a tulis batik.

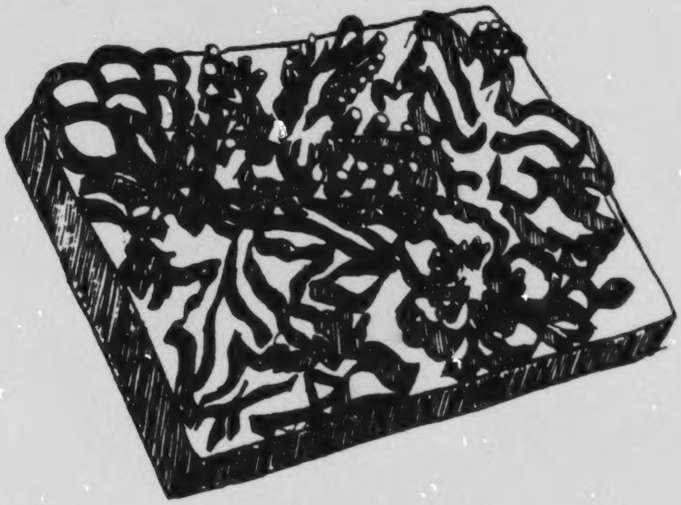


EARLY DUTCH CANTING.

The Cap Block

Block, or cap printing was not introduced into Java until the nineteenth century, but resulted in a considerable amount of time being saved. The printed could wax-print up to twenty sarongs in one day, whereas with a canting more than two weeks might be taken for the waxing of one sarong.

The blocks consist of soldered copper bands arranged in the shape of the required design. The wax is transfered to the block by means of a thick pad of cloth made rather like an inkpad used for rubber stamping. In making a batik it is necessary to have a soft "bed" to take a clean stamp from a block. It has been found that the skin of the stem of the banana palm cut into strips makes a perfect "bed", and in fact no artificial substitute with its exact qualities has yet been found.



CAP BLOCK.

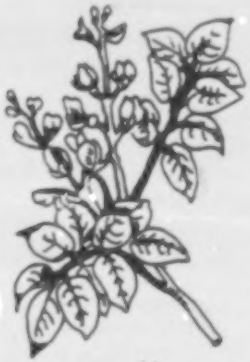
In order to print a sarong, a number of different blocks of varying shapes and sizes are used. The printer's care and attention must primarily be focussed on the correct joining of the various designs. Breaks and joints between the block prints made a cap fabric suitable only for the poorer sections of the community and for the tourist trade.

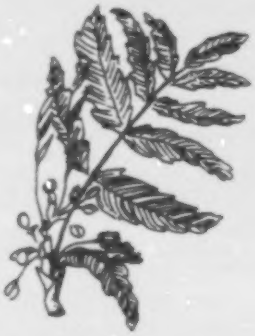
Block-printed fabrics can be made even more quickly and cheaply, but at the cost of quality; here, two fabrics are laid one on top of the other, and only printed on the upper surface.

DYES AND DYESTUFFS

Dyeing is an ancient craft found in every part of the world. In all probability, colour was first produced by rubbing or painting earth and mineral pigments onto cloth, and by stains obtained from crushing fruit and berries.

Until the nineteenth century, batik dyes were made by secret and complex recipes passed on from one generation to the next. Colour was at first restricted to the shade of blue given by indigo. Indigo dye is obtained from a shrub called Indigofera tinctoria, found all over Asia and Africa. The dye colouring is only found in the leaves, and these are cut and then fermented in tepid water. After the period of fermentation, the liquid becomes yellow-brown, and is then beaten to introduce oxygen into the solution. As the liquid oxidises, it turns blue and a sediment forms. This is then strained and dried into cakes of dye.


INDIGO PLANT.


MAHONIA PLANT.

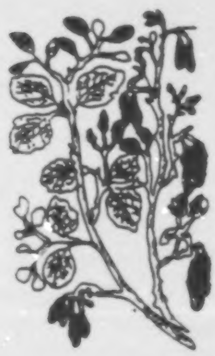
Other plant colours are extracted by boiling. Fibrous roots and barks should be soaked in water first, and the depth of shade is dependent on the length of time they are left immersed. Red is extracted from the root of mangkoudou. The material to be dyed must first be boiled in oil and then washed in a decoction of pari straw. Only then can the material be rubbed with the bark of the mangkoudou. If this process isn't followed, the colour will disappear upon washing. Madder is the easiest red dye to use and is extracted by simmering the dried outer skins of the root.

Soga-brown, another ancient colour of Javanese batik, is obtained from a tree bark only to be found in Java. Unfortunately the soga-brown colour is not sunproof and is apt to turn greyish after repeated washing and exposing to sunlight.

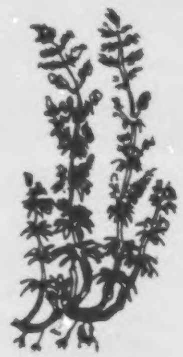
It is usual to dye cloth in a boiling solution, but Javanese batik is always dyed in a cold one. An exception to this is brown which is always dyed lukewarm.

There are very few natural dyestuffs which have a natural affinity to textile fibres, and become permanent without a preliminary treatment. Dyes that do possess this quality are described as being 'substantive'. In the majority of cases, the dyestuff will colour the cloth only when assisted by a chemical fixing agent, known as a mordant. Most mordants used in dyeing are metallic salts, although some are acidic. They should not adversely affect the physical characteristics of the cloth fibres, and enough time should be allowed for complete penetration. Insufficient penetration of the mordant into the fibres, will result in uneven dyeing, and in a loss of brilliance and fastness.

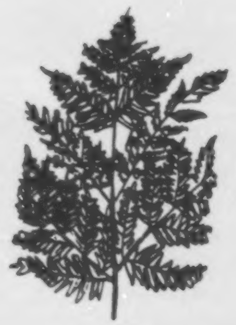
Nowadays, synthetic dyes are increasingly taking the place of the natural dyestuffs, but as yet the peculiar tint of soga-brown has not been imitated satisfactorily.



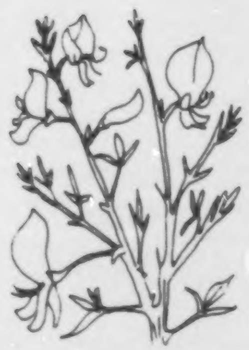
ALDER.



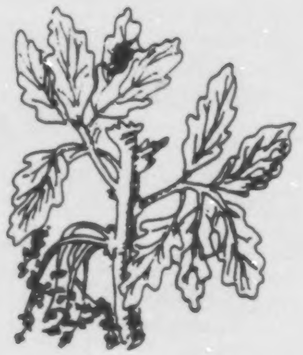
LADY'S BED STRAW.



BRACKEN.



BROOM.



OAK.

	Javanese	English
BLUE	Indigo - leaves	**Mahonia** - berries Woad - leaves
YELLOW	Curcuma (tumeric) tegrang Mangka - bark	Broom - tips/flowers Onion - outer skins Ragwort - tops/flowers St John's Wort - tops and flowers Snowberry - berries Tansy - tops/flowers
BROWN	Pettophorum pterocarpum Backer - bark	Black Walnut - hulls Greylichen - whole plant Larch - needles Oak - bark
RED	Mangkoudou - roots Morinda citrifolia - roots (Turkey Red)	Madder - roots Dahlia - red flowers Geranium - red flowers Hemlock tree - bark Lady's Bedstraw - roots
GREEN	obtained by covering light blue with yellow	Bracken - young tops Horsetail - green above ground part Ivy - berries when black Lily of the Valley - leaves Nettles - leaves/tops Privet - leaves
BLACK	Tingli - bark Mangostan (Malayan tree) - bark or is obtained by repeated dyeing with indigo.	Alder - bark Blackberry - young tips Buckthorn - berries Butternut - nuts

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A larger bibliography is available from: The Visual Arts in Multicultural Society
School of Art Education, Birmingham Polytechnic,
Margaret Street, BIRMINGHAM B3 3BX

USEFUL ADDRESSES

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Publications: Regular and ad hoc, available on request.

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School loans: Catalogue available.
Publications: Charts, books, slides, postcards of collections. Information available.

U.K. SUPPLIERS OF MATERIALS

DYESTUFFS

Dyes - CIBA Clayton Ltd MANCHESTER

Printex - Winsor & Newton Ltd Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex

Polyprint pigment colours - E.C. McCreary & Co
21 Prince Edward Drive, BELFAST

Direct dyestuffs & Mordant - Skilbeck Brothers Ltd Bagnall House
(1lb tins only)
55-57 Glengall Road, LONDON SE15

Indigo grains - Skilbeck Brothers (as above)

Direct dyestuffs & mordant - Pronk, Davis & Rusby Ltd
(¼lb or 1lb tins)
44 Penton Street, LONDON N1

Dylon Cold Water Dyes etc - Mayborn Products Ltd Dylon Works
139-147 Sydenham Road, LONDON EC26

Minimum 5lb lots of any dyestuff - ICI Dyestuffs Division
Hexagon House, Blackley, M9

CHEMICALS, THICKENING & WAX

All available from - Gould Thomas & Co Albert Road Keynshaw
SOMERSET

Batik Waxes - Alec Tirini Ltd 72 Charlotte Street, LONDON W1

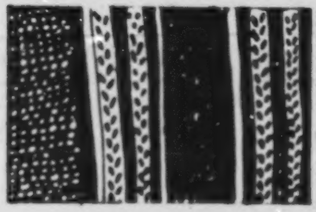
CANTING TOOLS

Available from - Dryad Handicrafts Ltd 22 Bloomsbury Street
LONDON WC1

Dryad Handicrafts Ltd Northgates, LEICESTER

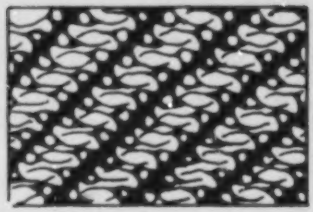
D. McKay 85 East Road, CAMBRIDGE

SLIDE IDENTIFICATION



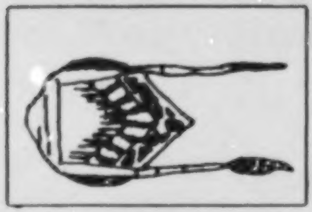
SARONG.

Imitation batik, patterned with a spotted kawung motif. Patterned traditionally associated with Djakarta. (C. Java) 6'6" x 3'6¼". V & A. 1S. 121-1965.



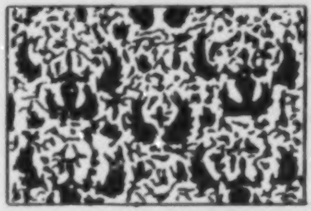
KAIN PANDJANG(SKIRT CLOTH).

Parang rusak motif.
From C. Java - traditionally associated with Jogjakarta and Surakarta. 8'5" x 3'7".
V & A. 1M. 265-1921.



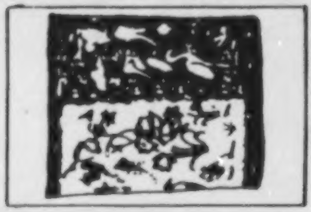
WARRIOR'S HAT.

Headsquare, supported by a circular cane strip to keep it in shape.
V & A. 1M. 278-1965.



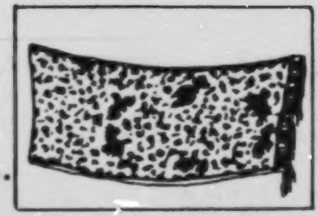
KAIN PANDJANG(SKIRT CLOTH).

Stylized objects, predominantly using (lar) motifs, repeated on a semen background.
From C. Java 8'3½" x 3'5".
V & A. 1S. 63-1961.



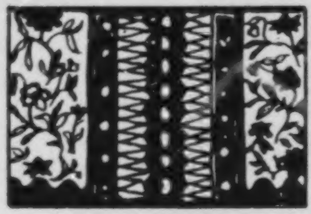
SARONG.

Brightly coloured cloth, patterned with birds and floral motifs. Probably from N. Java.
V & A. 1S. 157-1965.



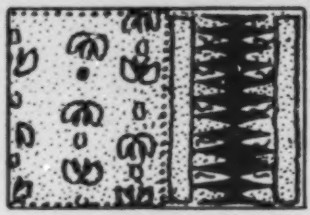
SLENDANG(SHOULDER CLOTH).

Silk patterned with stylized birds and flowers on a background of leafy sprays. Probably from N. Java 8'11" x 1'10".
V & A. 1S. 28-1960.



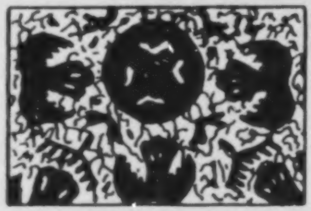
SARONG.

Patterned with large, stylized flowering, leafy branches.
From E. Java(Surabaya)
6'10½" x 3'5¾"
V & A. 1S. 64-1961.



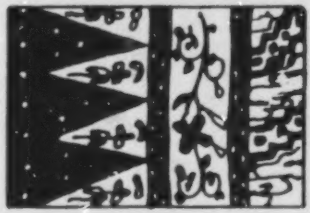
SARONG.

Patterned with stylized peacocks and other motifs on a semen background. From N. Java (Pekalongan) 6'5½" x 3'5".
V & A. 1S. 65-1961.



KAIN KAPALA(HEADSQUARE).

Patterned in circular design and sawat (bird) motifs on a semen background.
Lent by Mrs. Rosemary Flemons.



SAMPLE SECTION.

Flower-filled tumpal motif bordering a parang rusak design.
Lent by Mrs. Rosemary Flemons.

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SOME HELPFUL HINTS ON BATIK.

1) When melting wax use a pot wider than the heat source so that no dripping wax can drop on to naked flame.

2) Use a low flame to heat wax to ensure even heat distribution so that wax at the bottom of the vessel does not burn.

3) It is a good idea to place the pot of wax in a larger vessel containing water. The water is then heated giving greater control.

4) When drawing with a canting keep a wad of absorbant material in the free hand on which to rest canting when not in use. This stops unwanted drips on the fabric.

5) When waxing fabric stretch fabric over a frame or board.

6) When waxing draw all outlines with canting before filling in large areas with brush. This prevents hot wax soaking into unwanted areas.

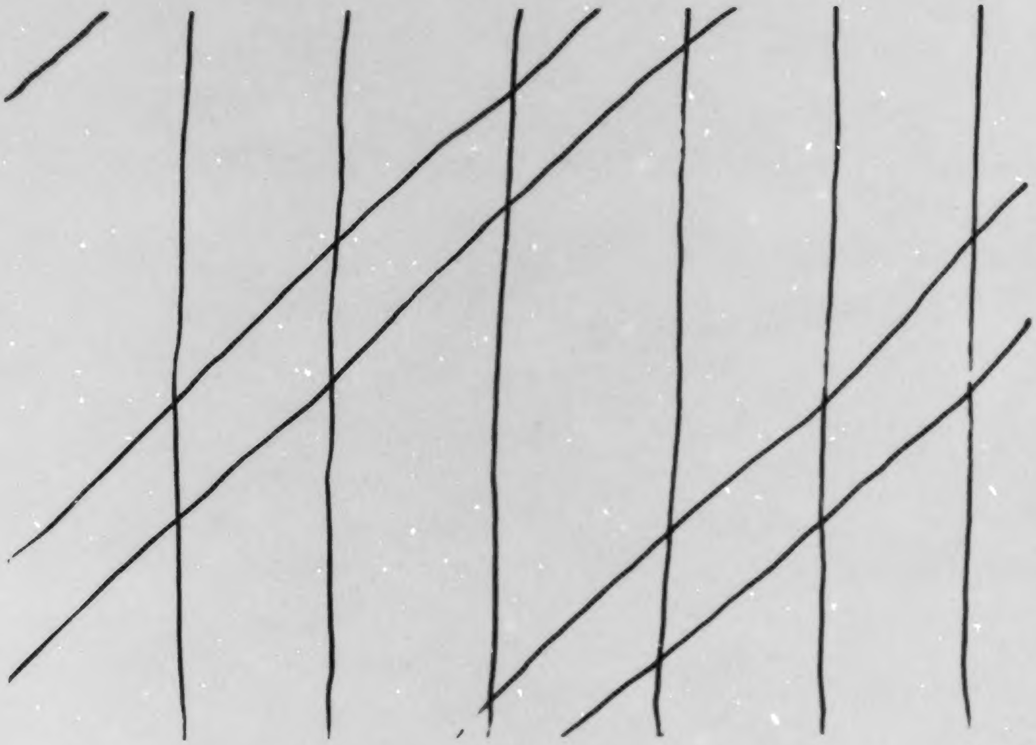
7) For filling in large areas with wax use a stiff, short bristled brush making sure to overlap the strokes so that all the area is waxed properly.

8) Mistakes can be removed by wetting the cloth around the spot with cold water and heating unwanted wax with a hot knife blade, then rubbing the cloth against itself to flake off wax.

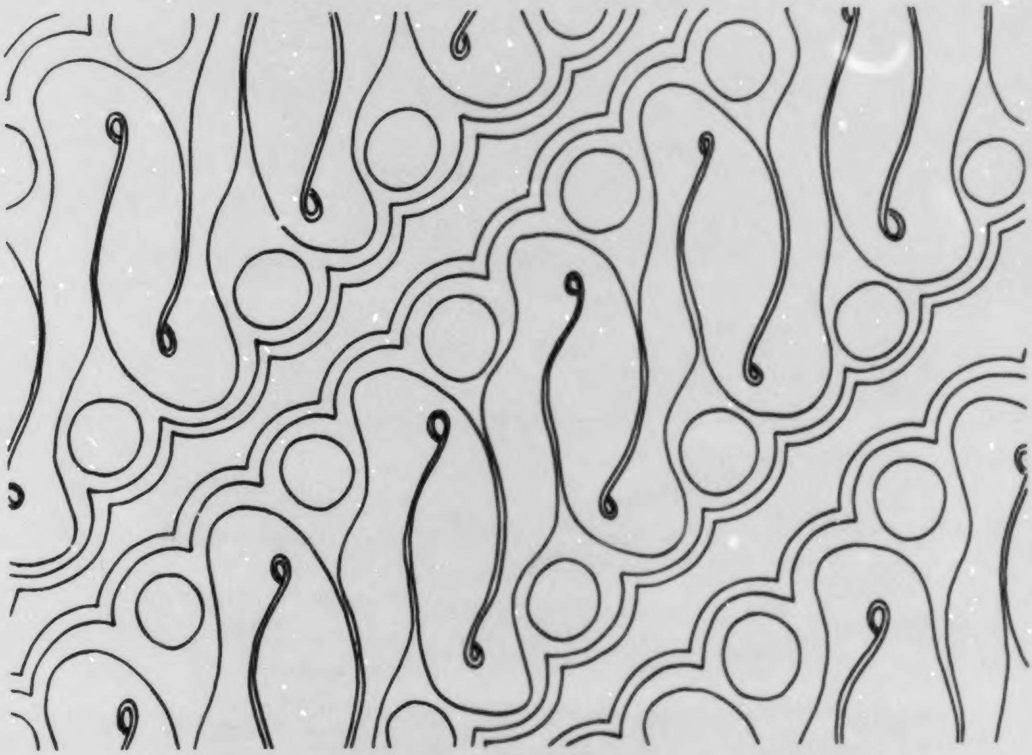
9) Various crackling effects can be provided by crumpling, rolling or wrapping the waxed fabric around a point to produce a star effect.

JAVA 38

A GUIDE TO A TWO COLOUR BATIK



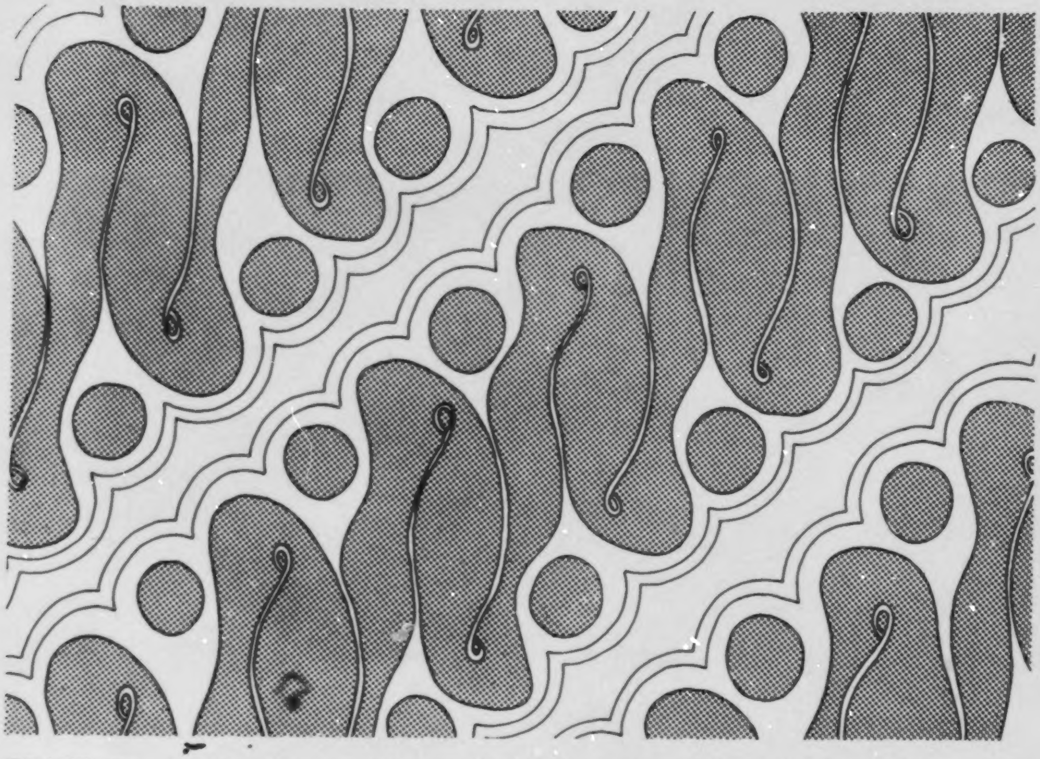
STAGE 1 Rough design is sketched out with charcoal on fabric



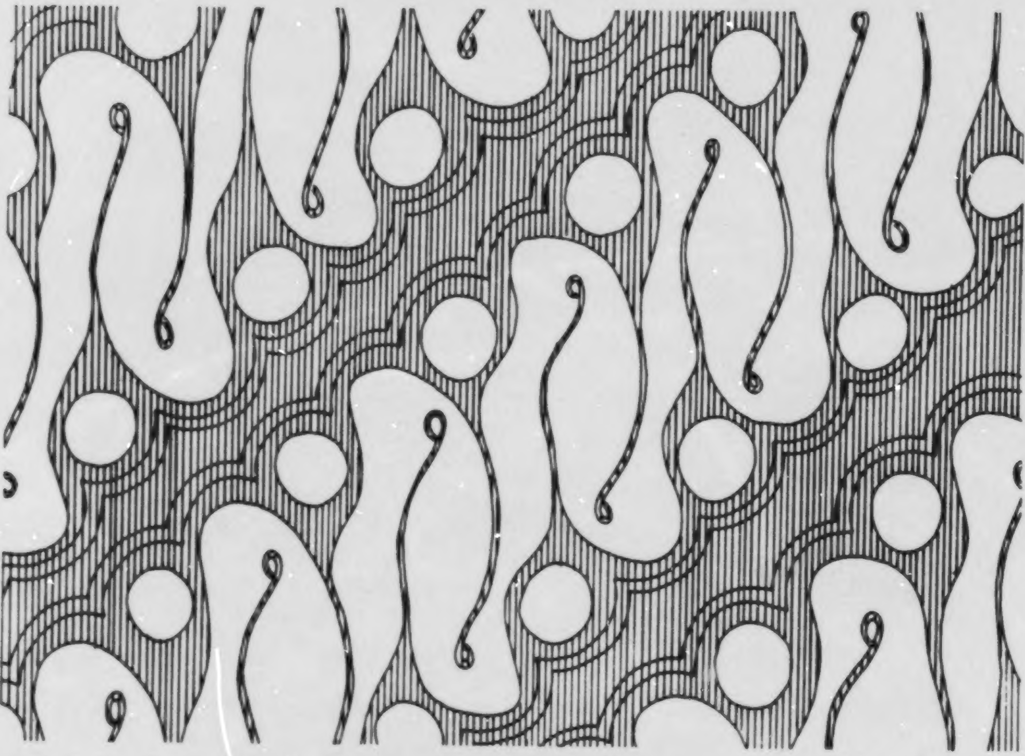
STAGE 2 Design is drawn out in wax with canting

JAVA 39

▒ Represents waxed areas ▥ Represents dyed areas

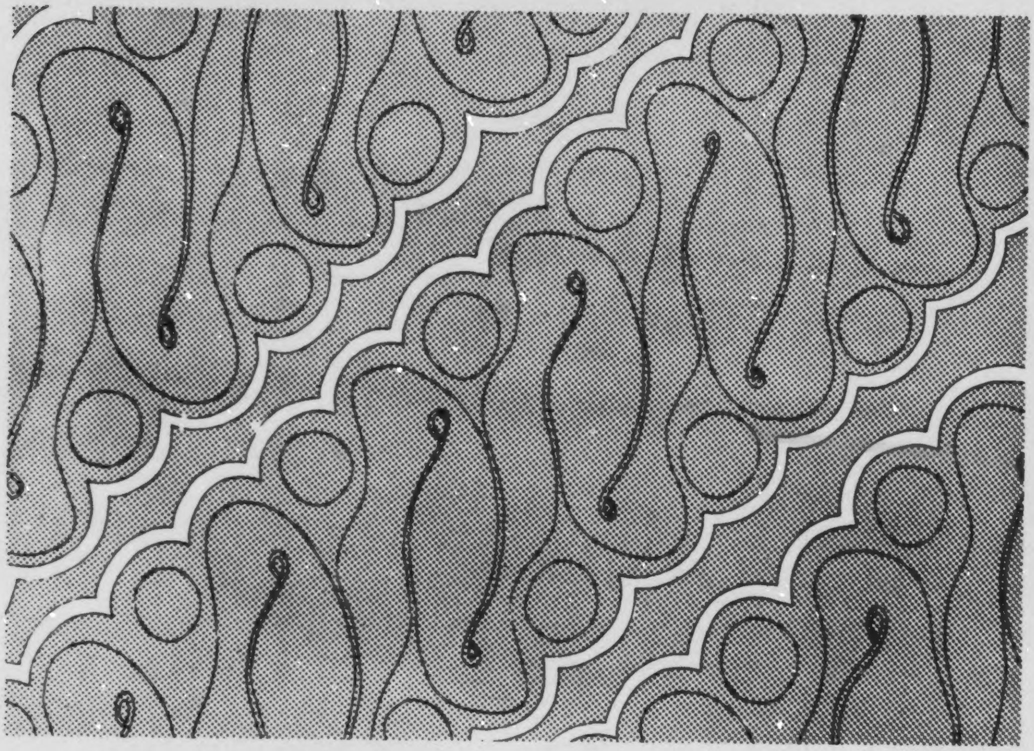


STAGE 3 Areas to be reserved first are blocked in with wax using a brush

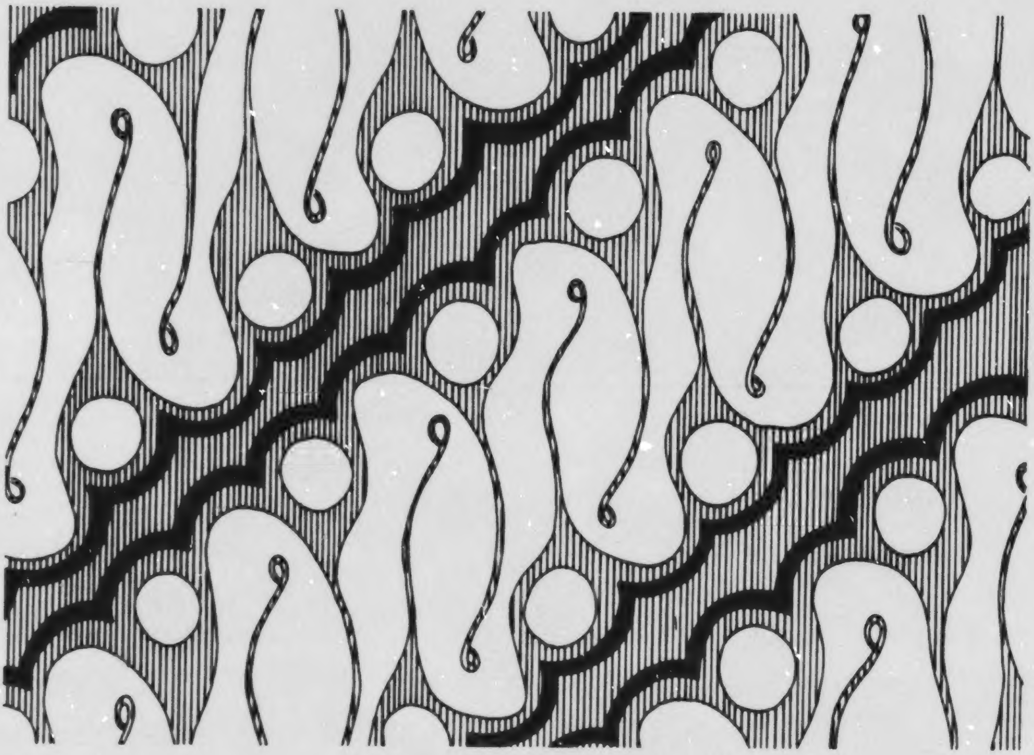


STAGE 4 Dye fabric, rinse and remove wax by ironing between sheets of newspaper

░ Represents waxed areas ▨ Represents dyed areas

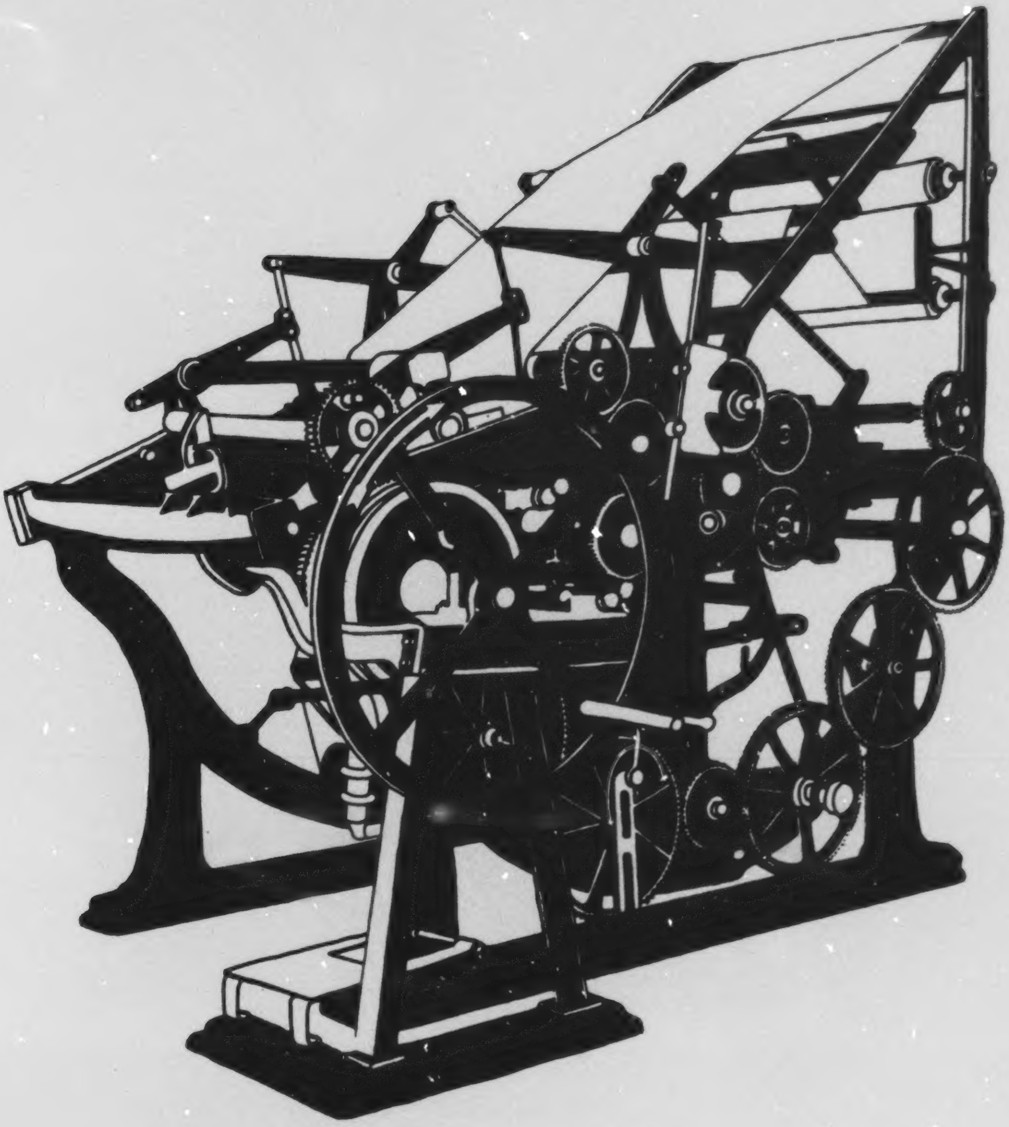


STAGE 5 Areas to be reserved for second dyeing are blocked in with wax



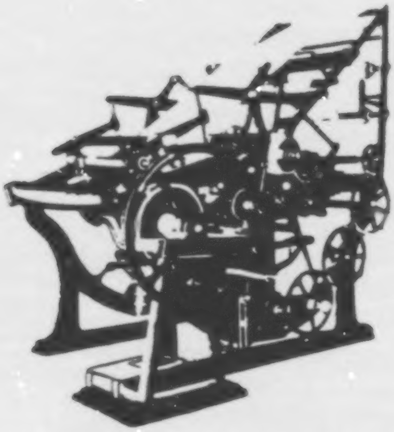
STAGE 6 Dye with second colour, rinse and remove wax. Fabric may be boiled to remove all wax

DUTCH WAX PRINTS



DYED AND PRINTED TEXTILES

DUTCH WAX PRINTS



Ethnographic Resources for Art Education
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Margaret Street
Birmingham B3 3BX

Cover illustration - A Perrotine Machine - see page 6

Researched & Written by Sue Burke

Photography, Illustration & Layout by Wade Turner

Layout & Printing by Sally Moore

Project Administration by Michele Scully
and Barbara J Scanes

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Support for this third edition has been given by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to whom we are most grateful.

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DYED & PRINTED TEXTILES FROM JAVA, WEST AFRICA AND HOLLAND

How to use this pack

Dyed & Printed Textiles is the second in a series of teaching and learning materials produced by "The Art in Multicultural Society Project". The intention of this pack is to present in a readily accessible form dyed and printed textile techniques from a variety of cultures. We hope that this pack will contribute to the fostering of a multicultural approach to visual arts and crafts because we firmly believe that familiarity with other traditions enriches the potential for innovation in artistic as well as cultural terms within our society.

The pack is in three sections each associated with a particular country. Each section draws together both historical and ethnographic materials as well as the development of particular technical traditions. Each section may either be used on its own or in conjunction with either or both of the others. When used together these booklets illustrate the cross-fertilisation of cultures through trade and movements of people. Another way the materials may be approached is via the colour-coded sections employed in each booklet. The historical and ethnographic material pertinent to each culture is printed on a yellow background; the techniques and dyes are on blue and the uses of the textiles, clothing and designs are brought together in the section on a green background. This colour coding is designed to provide a number of different ways of cross referencing material.

The slides available with the pack provide a unique visual resource bringing together examples from National Museums and private collections as well as illustrating processes. The slides are anotated and explained in each section and are also referred to widely in the text.

We hope that you will find this pack sufficiently flexible to suit your particular needs. We would be most appreciative of any comments you might have regarding the packs reception and in particular any suggestions for improvement.

Nick Stanley

Phil Slight

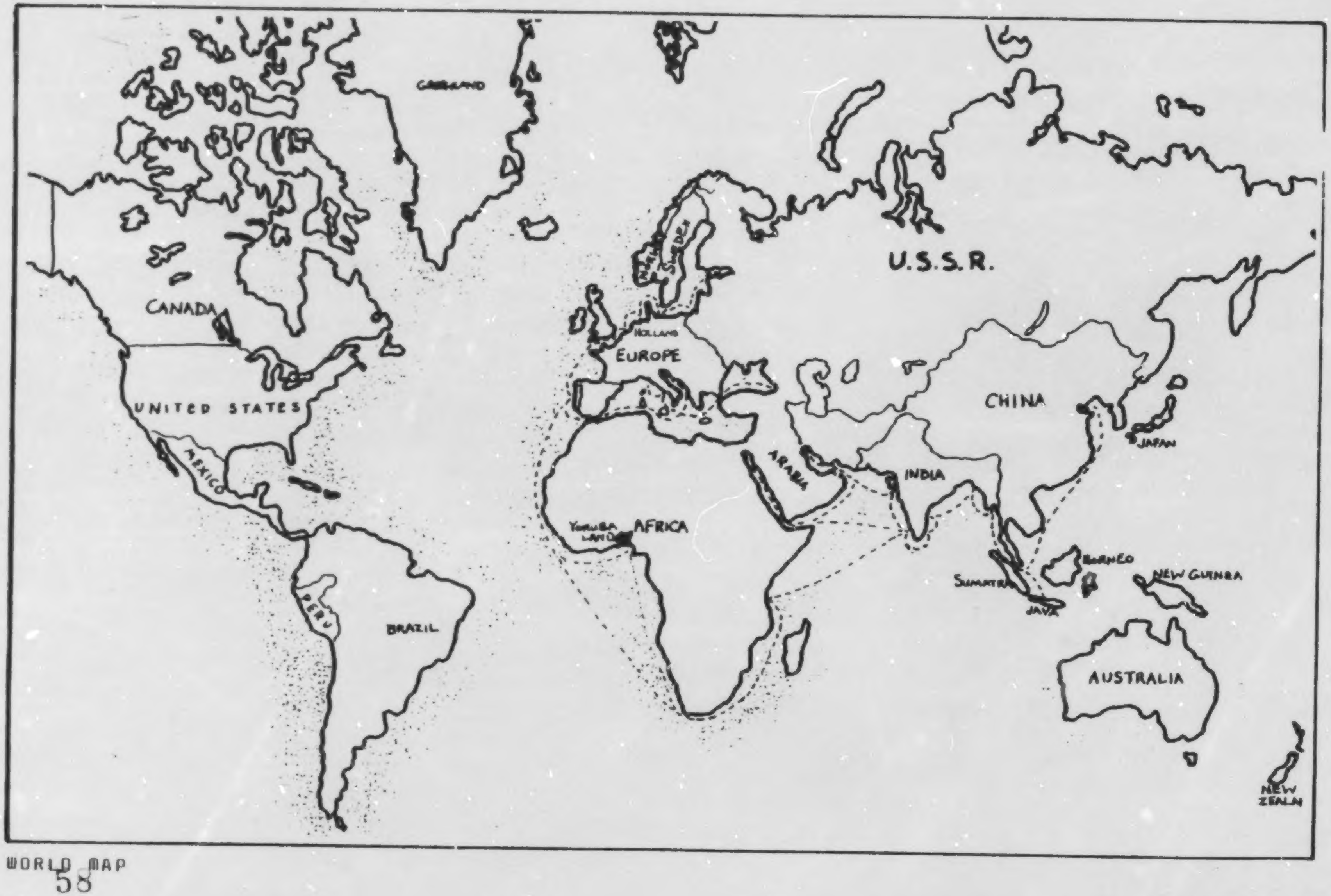
Helga Loeb

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESOURCES
FOR ART EDUCATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank both Vlisco B.V., Binnen Parallelweg 27, Helmond, Holland, and A. Brunnschweiler-UK, 16 Sharp Street, Manchester 4, for their invaluable help in compiling this section. In particular we would like to thank Mr. C.H. Krantz of Vlisco B.V., and Mr. Brian Anderton and Mr. Eric Knott of Brunnschweiler-UK.

In addition we would like to thank both companies for samples of materials, some of which are included in this pack, whilst others are available for loan from 'The Printed Textiles Collection', School of Art Education, Birmingham Polytechnic, Margaret Street, Birmingham 3.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ARABIA
INDIA
YORUBA LAND
AFRICA
BORNEO
NEW GUINEA
SUMATRA
JAVA
AUSTRALIA
NEW ZEALN

WORLD MAP

THE DUTCH TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Trade and crafts began to develop in the Low Countries as early as the eighth century, under the rule of the Emperor Charlemagne. Linen and woollen cloths already played an important part in the economy, and were among the first commodities to be exported.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries trade in The Netherlands developed in a remarkable manner. Amsterdam and Hoorn became new centres of commerce, and towns such as Ghent, Ypres, Bruges, Utrecht, Haarlem and Leiden became flourishing centres of production.

In 1428, almost the whole of what we now call Holland and Belgium passed, partly by conquest and partly by inheritance, to the dukes of Burgundy. In 1515, The Netherlands came under the rule of Charles V, the great-grandson of the last Duke. Charles was to become the Holy Roman Emperor in 1519, thereby becoming feudal overlord of all the German States, and king of Spain and its dominions in the New World in 1521.

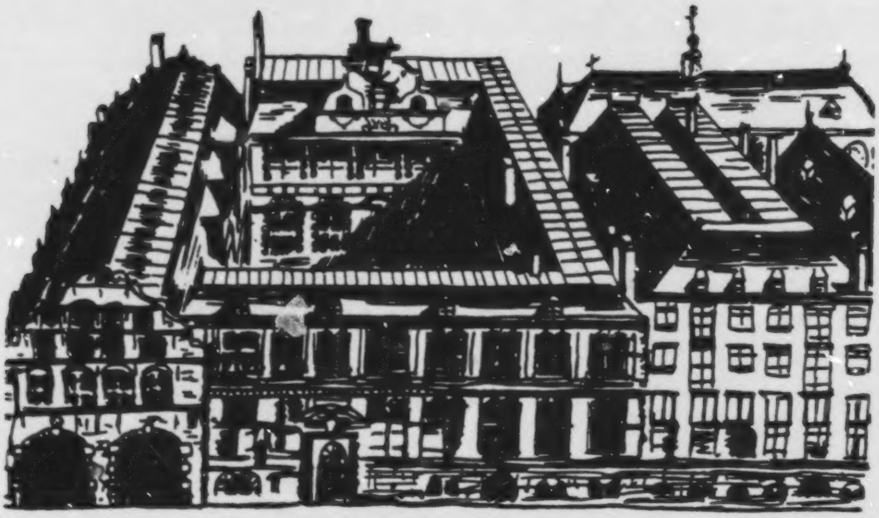
Charles was the head of the powerful Hapsburg family, and wished to bind The Netherlands, with their flourishing trade and industries, to his vast possessions in Europe and the Americas. However, this was too enormous a task, and Charles' endeavours proved disastrous to the country, especially under his son and successor, Philip II of Spain (1556-1598). There followed a struggle for independence from Spain which was to last until 1648.

In spite of nearly 80 years of war, the Dutch economy continued to prosper. Trade was the principal economic mainstay, and the Dutch soon became known as the 'Carriers of Europe'. The growth of Amsterdam was particularly rapid, and it became the leading port of Western Europe.

The War of Independence was another factor in the rise of Dutch trade. In 1580, after a disputed succession Philip II became king of Portugal and consequently forbad all trade between Lisbon and The Netherlands, with whom he was at war. At this time, the Portuguese were great sea-explorers who controlled the lucrative spice-trade in the East, which they had taken over from local seamen. Printed chintzes, made on the Coromandel Coast of India were taken to Indonesia where they were bartered for spices, which in turn were brought to Western Europe.

Since the Portuguese had been acting as the 'middle man' for the European merchants, the Dutch were now compelled to make their own trading voyages to the East. At first they tried to reach India and China via the Arctic Sea, but when this proved impracticable, they turned southwards and succeeded in gaining possession of the numerous trading posts originally founded by the Portuguese.

These acquisitions formed the basis of an extensive and exceedingly profitable trade with the East Indies, and to administer this lucrative trade, the Dutch East India Company was founded in 1602. The Dutch enjoyed what was practically a monopoly, and Amsterdam became the centre of European trade with the Indies. The goods which poured into Amsterdam were, for the most part, stored in East India House, the headquarters of the Company in Amsterdam.

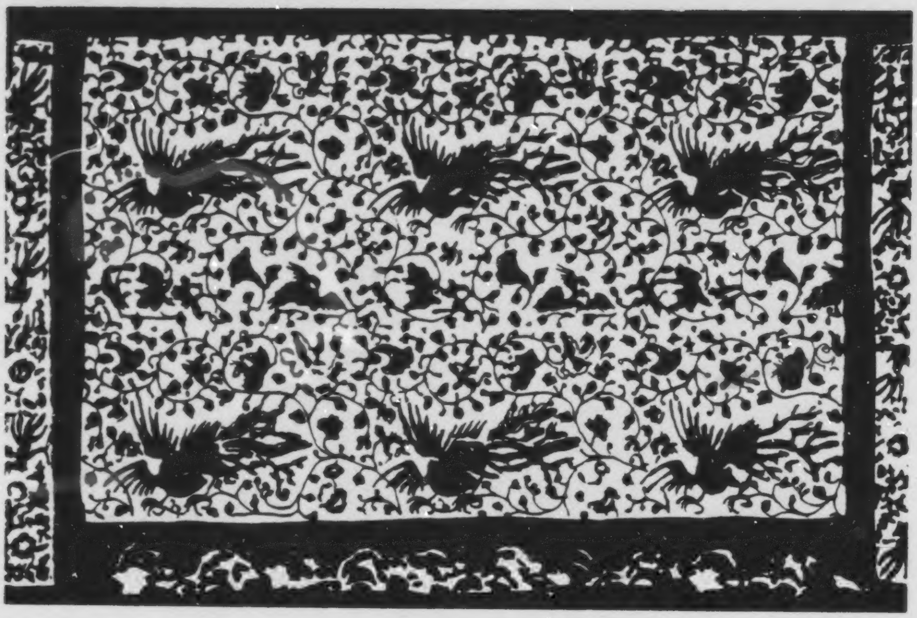


EAST INDIA HOUSE,OFFICES OF THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY

Among the goods brought back to Western Europe by the East India Company were large quantities of printed and painted cloths. At first, these brilliantly coloured cloths did not appeal to the European taste, but once the heavy and sombre-hued Spanish costume of the day began to give way in favour of a lighter, more colourful style of dress, they became more fashionable.

Eventually, demand for the cloths became so overwhelming that the East India Company was unable to meet it, and many attempts were made by European textile printers to produce imitations. Initially, these attempts were unsuccessful, since the imitations could not compete in quality with the originals.

In 1678, two Amsterdam merchants and a Turk living in Holland, founded the first European print works at Amersfoort, where printing and dyeing were practised according to Indian methods. Within a couple of years several establishments appeared in Amsterdam where the raw materials, imported by the East India Company, were widely available. Moreover, Amsterdam offered the greatest facilities for selling the prints, especially those which were to be sold back to the East Indies.



BLOCK-PRINTED COTTON HANGING. EUROPEAN FOR JAVANESE USE

Cotton printing could spread very easily in Holland, as it was a 'free craft', unrestricted by the many guild regulations which affected the older trades. Any person with sufficient knowledge, and the necessary capital could therefore set up as a cotton printer.

However, the prosperity of the Dutch cotton-printing industry was shortlived, and by 1800 there were only four printing works left in the country. The main reason for the decline was competition from the French, the British and the German printing industries.

Holland and Belgium, (the former Austrian Netherlands), were united in 1815 as part of the European settlement after the defeat of Napoleon. The printing industry was now in such a bad state in Holland that Belgian cotton-printers had to supply the prints required for export to the East Indies.

The unification of the two countries was not a success, and after the secession of Belgium in 1830, new print works had to be established if control of this industry, so vital to Dutch overseas trade, was to be regained.

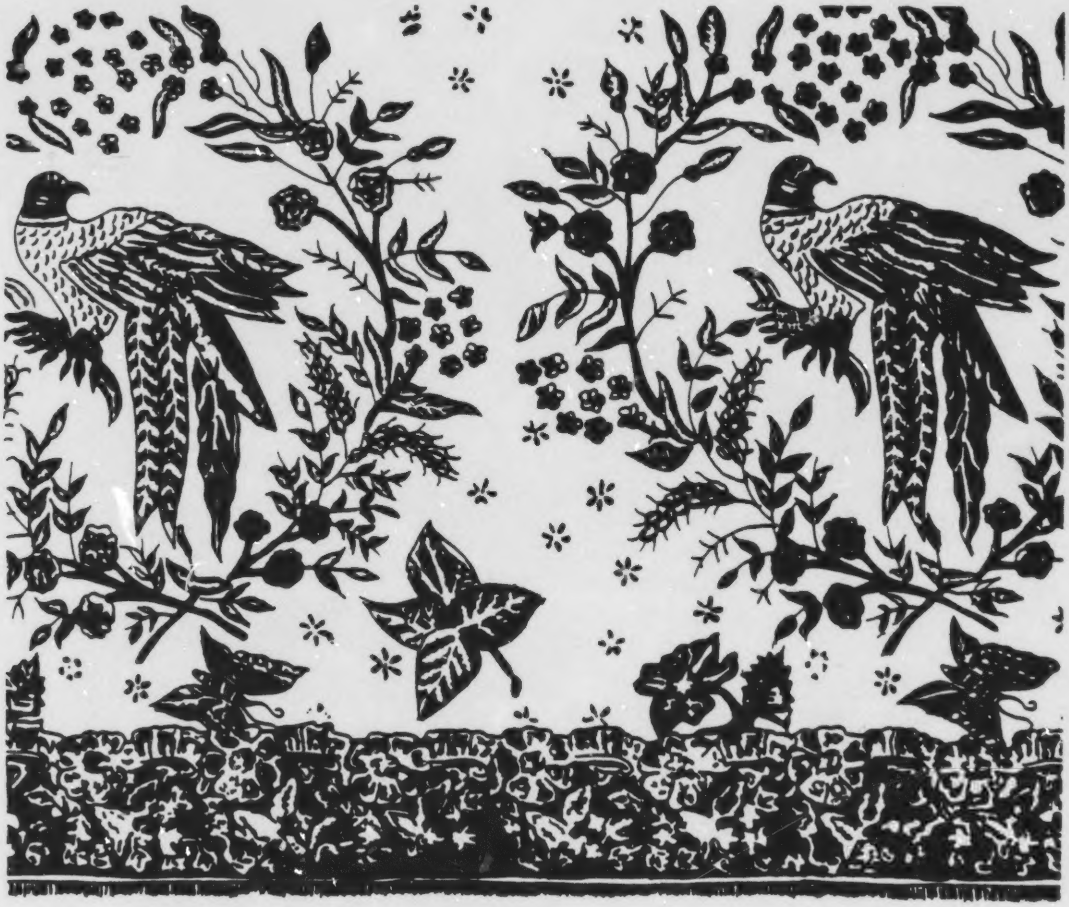
To this end it was suggested to the Dutch king that the rejuvenation of the textile industry should take two forms. Firstly, the existing hand-weaving centres at Twente and Brabant should be extended. Secondly, new textile mills should be established at Haarlem, Leiden and Kralingen, near Rotterdam. At the same time, it was hoped that with the introduction of new industries, unemployment in these areas would be relieved.

Of the three companies set up in Haarlem, the most successful was a printing division of the Belgian Company, Prévinaire. Although the experiment proved to be unsuccessful as a means of combatting unemployment, it was during this period that Javanese batik cloths were successfully imitated by the Dutch wax blocking process.

To make the Haarlem textile mills profitable, Prévinaire and Company were urged to start the export of batik cloths to Java, where a large market existed. The Javanese themselves were unable to produce the cloths on a large enough scale to meet the demand for them.

Although the company were able to copy the Javanese cloths, it was a long time before they were able to reproduce the wax scent which so greatly characterised the original batiks.

In 1875, Prévinaire and Company merged with another, not so successful, Haarlem mill to form the N.V. Haarlemsche Katoen Maatschappij. The management was in the hands of M.P.T. Prévinaire, the son of the founder who had died in 1854.



ROLLER-PRINTED COTTON.DUTCH FOR EAST INDIAN MARKET

'LA JAVANAISE'

The Dutch producers of batik cloths began by using the same techniques as those used in Java, and had even brought a number of skilled Javanese craftsmen to Holland to teach the craft to Dutch workers. However, the process was too slow to be commercially viable, and in order to speed up production Prévinaire came up with an ingenious invention.

The founder and manager of the company, J.B.T. Prévinaire, succeeded in converting a French printing machine, the Perrotine, into a printing machine for the imitation batiks. He named his new machine 'La Javanaise'.

The Perrotine had been invented by a French engineer called Louis-Jerome Perrot in 1834. It printed from flat wooden blocks, but instead of the pattern being carved out of the wood, as in traditional blocks, it was formed by the insertion into the block of metal strips and pins.

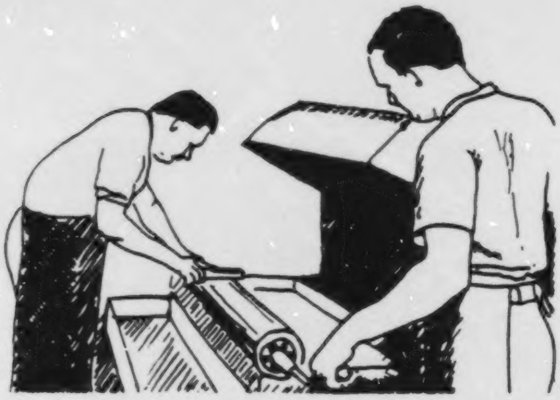
The Perrotine was never popular in England, but it is believed that, within two years of its invention, about sixty machines were sold in Europe. In addition to preserving the hand-blocked character of the prints, the Perrotine was popular because it could replace twelve hand-printers.

ENGRAVED COPPER ROLLER PRINTING

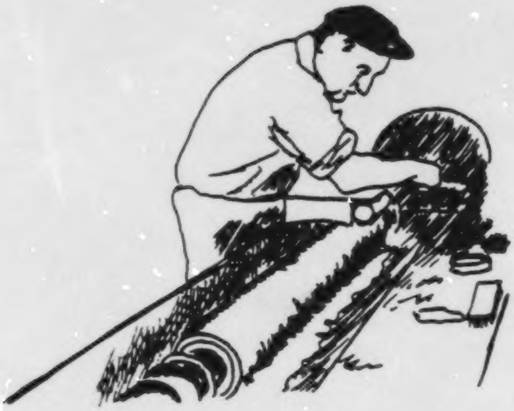
The popularity of the Perrotine was shortlived, and by 1918 only a few were still in use. Even before Perrot had invented his machine, a patent had been taken out in England on a machine which was to form the foundation of the modern textile industry.

The invention of the engraved-roller printing machine is usually attributed to Thomas Bell, a Scotsman, who patented it in 1783. In essence, the process calls for the transferring of the original design onto copper rollers; the rollers are covered with dye and as the fabric and rollers meet, the design is transferred to the fabric. The dye paste is held in the engraved indentions of the roller, and the colour is transferred to the fabric when it is pressed against the engraved roller. The excess print paste is removed from the raised surface of the engraved roller by the doctor blade.

In the production of wax prints, the same process is used, except that dye is replaced with liquid resin. Although the prints are called wax prints, resin is used because it is cheaper, and more easily available than wax. The cloth is covered on both sides with the resin-resist by means of specially engraved duplex rollers. Duplex rollers enable the resist pattern to be applied simultaneously to both sides of the fabric.



ETCHING DESIGN IN RELIEF ON ROLLER



POLISHING ROLLER TO ENSURE SMOOTH CONTACT WITH CLOTH

In order to achieve the 'crackling' effect so characteristic of the Javanese batiks, the resin, once it has hardened, is lightly broken. At the first dye-bath one can consequently be sure of an imitation of the background 'crackling'. For large areas, wavy lines are engraved onto the roller, and the 'crackling' is printed onto the cloth.

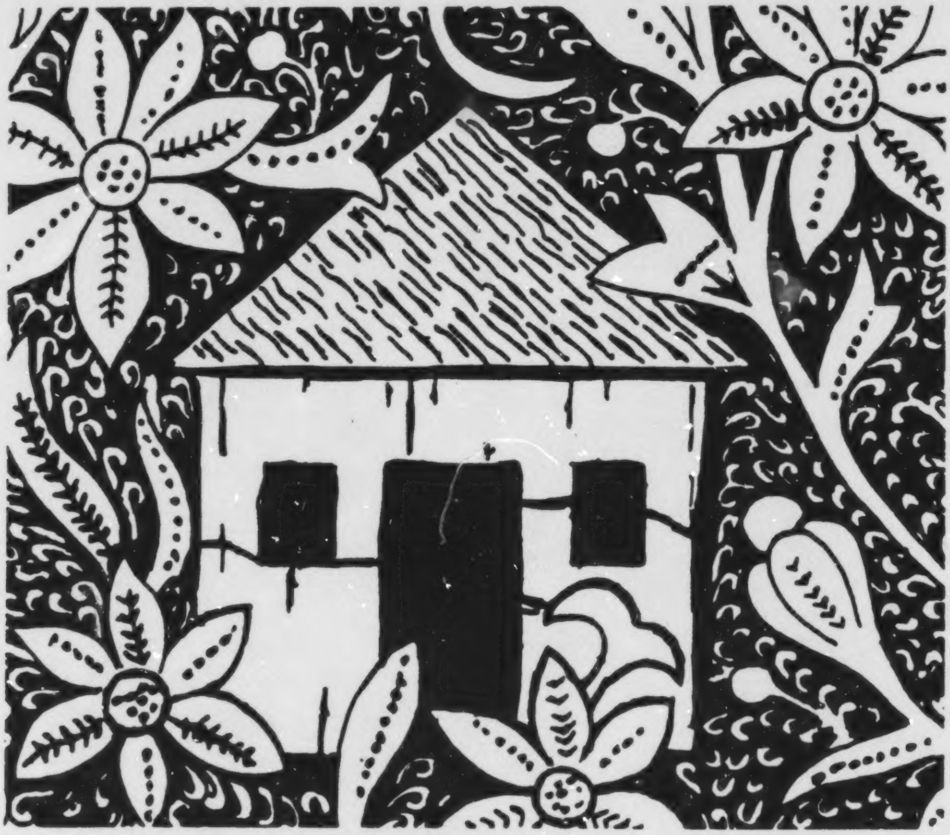
After dyeing, additional colours and intricate detail are hand-blocked in - hence the name of these prints: wax block prints.

THE NEED FOR NEW MARKETS

Holland first began its exports to Java at a time when the demand for batik cloths within Java itself, could not be met by home production. However, during the latter half of the nineteenth century the cap block was used in Java to apply the waxed design to the cloth, instead of the canting(1), as had previously been used. Consequently, production within Java greatly increased, and European exporters found it increasingly difficult to sell their cloths to the East Indies.

The increase in Javanese production came at the same time as European production was also being increased because of the use of engraved copper rollers. Prévinaire's production had been increased to 150-200 pieces of 24 yard long fabrics per day, as against 10-12 pieces with the rebuilt Perrotine.

It was obvious that a new market would have to be found, and this was done through an intermediary, a Scotsman called Ebenezer Brown Fleming.



DETAIL OF MODERN DUTCH WAX PRINT

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(1) See Javanese Batik handbook, page 29.

THE WEST AFRICAN MARKET

The Dutch had maintained trading connections with West Africa since the late sixteenth century, with the West India Company being founded in 1621. The Company concentrated its activities along the Gold Coast (modern day Ghana), and like its counterpart, the East India Company, was granted quasi-sovereign powers in the land under its dominion. The African Gold Coast was a much coveted area for many other European nations, and the arrival of the Dutch was followed, in 1631, by that of the British, and subsequently the Swedes, Danes and Germans had colonies there.

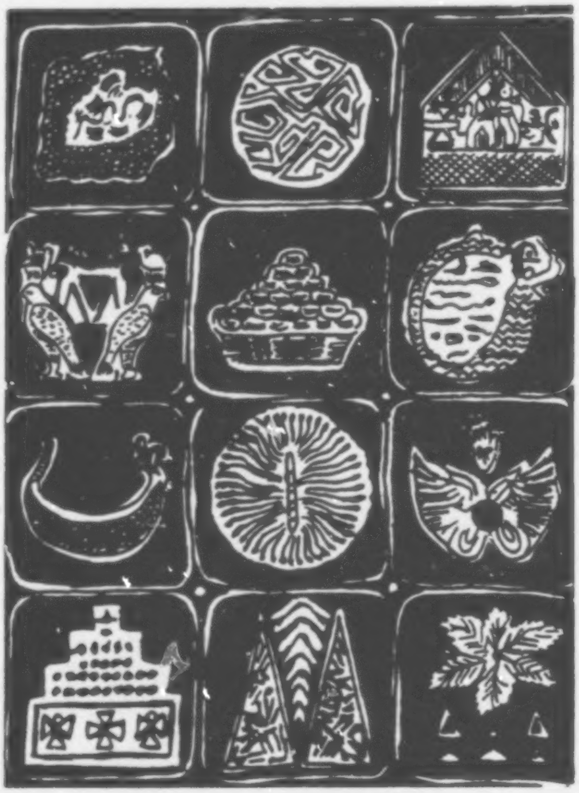
The West India Company was built upon shakier foundations than the East India Company, and trade in commodities was less important than trade in slaves to the New World. In 1792 its charter came to an end, and possession of the territories fell to the Dutch government, who kept control until 1872 when their West African possessions were surrendered to the British.

ANIMAL MOTIF

A consequence of the Dutch connection with West Africa was the recruitment, by the Dutch, of Gold Coast men as mercenaries for their army in the East Indies. The Dutch had originally supplemented their East India Army with European recruits, mainly Belgian and German; but when this became difficult, the idea was put forward to extend the recruitment to the Gold Coast, with the consequence that, in 1833, the first African soldiers arrived in Java, and by 1840, 2,240 had embarked for the island.

However, the recruitment was suspended in 1841, for fear that other European nations might misinterpret it as being a continuation of the now abolished slave-trade. It was resumed in a different form in 1855 and lasted until the Dutch surrendered the territories in 1872. A number of the soldiers remained in Java, whilst others returned to West Africa, often to their home port of Elimina in Ghana. It was with the return of these soldiers that an interest in the batiked cloths of Java was introduced to West Africa, and the basis was laid for a receptive market for the wax block prints of Prévinaire and Company.

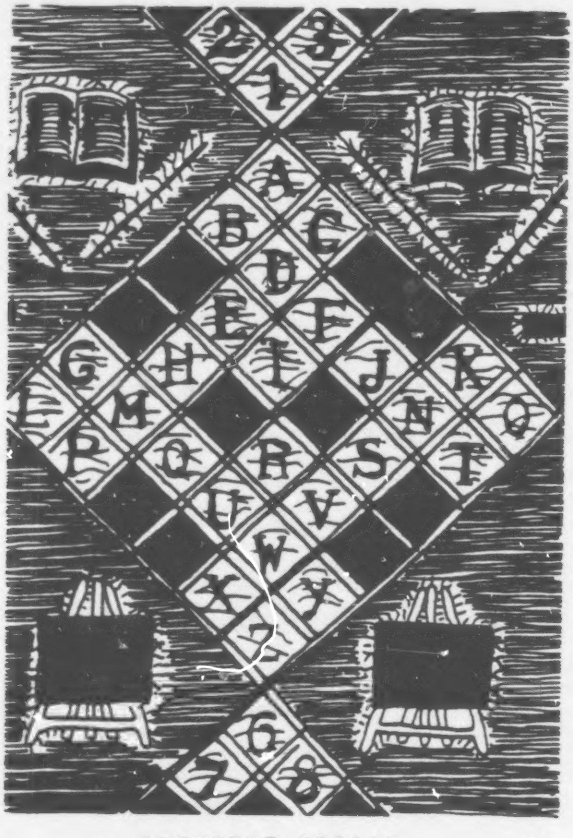
Ebenezer Brown Fleming is said to have been the first to introduce imitation batiks to the Gold Coast. He was born on 25th November 1858 in Fife, Scotland, the son of a United Presbyterian minister. In addition to the strong clerical thread running through his family, there were also close ties with the international textile trade. Brown Fleming's brother was a Glasgow merchant, he himself became an East India merchant. He would therefore have been fully aware of Britain's trade with territories in Africa, and it is possible that he had already established commercial contacts on route to the East via Africa. Moreover, he had strong ties with the Holt Shipping Line which was the principal transporter between Britain and the Gold Coast. It has not yet been established that Ebenezer Brown Fleming actually discovered the West African market for wax block prints, but it does seem likely.



EGYPTIAN-STYLE PRINT

The first wax block prints, made by the Haarlemsche Katoen Maatschappij, were exported to West Africa in 1893, and the venture was successful for both parties. Brown Fleming acquired the monopoly on the wax-print trade, and from 1906 onwards the business was continued by the firm Brown Fleming Limited, under the management of his son, and son-in-law. In 1939, the firm was taken over by the Calico Printers Association, which now forms part of Tootal Limited, Manchester.

As for the Haarlemsche Katoen Maatschappij, they had more than doubled their workforce by 1900, and in 1914 the yearly production was said to be six million yards. Unfortunately, during the war years, 1914-18, it became increasingly difficult for the company to obtain sufficient raw materials, such that in 1917 the factory had to close down, and eventually the Haarlemsche Katoen Maatschappij went into liquidation in June 1918. Thereafter, wax block print production was continued by Van Vlissingen and Company, in Helmond and by Ankersmit in Deventer.



ALPHABET DESIGN

WAX BLOCK PRINTING TODAY

Wax block printing is now centred at Vlisco's in Helmond. Their chief competitor is A. Brunnschweiler-U.K., a division of Tootal Limited.

The finished cloths are imported into West Africa by large companies, the most important of which is the United Africa Company. Here they are sold to women market traders who buy the cloth wholesale from the importing firms, and then sell it in the market at retail price. These 'market mammies' form an important link between producer, importer and buyer, and they provide a valuable source of feedback to the European producers; the most successful are regularly consulted as regards designs.

Cloths are imported mainly into Togo, but the chief demand comes from Nigeria, where the European prints are banned in order to protect the state's own textile industry. However, this does not prevent many cloths from being smuggled in, and it even enhances their attraction - although there are now six wax-print factories in West Africa, Dutch prints remain the most prestigious and the most costly.

As far as the designs are concerned, many resemble those of Indonesian cloths, although they have not actually been copied from them. The main feature of the cloths intended for West Africa is the heavy 'crackling' effect running across the ground of the fabric. 'Crackling' is seen as a fault in original hand-made Javanese batik, but is deliberately accentuated for the African market in order to satisty local taste. Some designs have remained popular since the beginning of the trade in wax block prints, while others come and go according to the fashion. Alphabet designs are always popular as are commemorative cloths. Fashion changes can be effected by executing the same designs in different colours. There are now thousands of designs in the sample rooms of Vlisco and of Brunnschweiler, with at least 200 being added every year.

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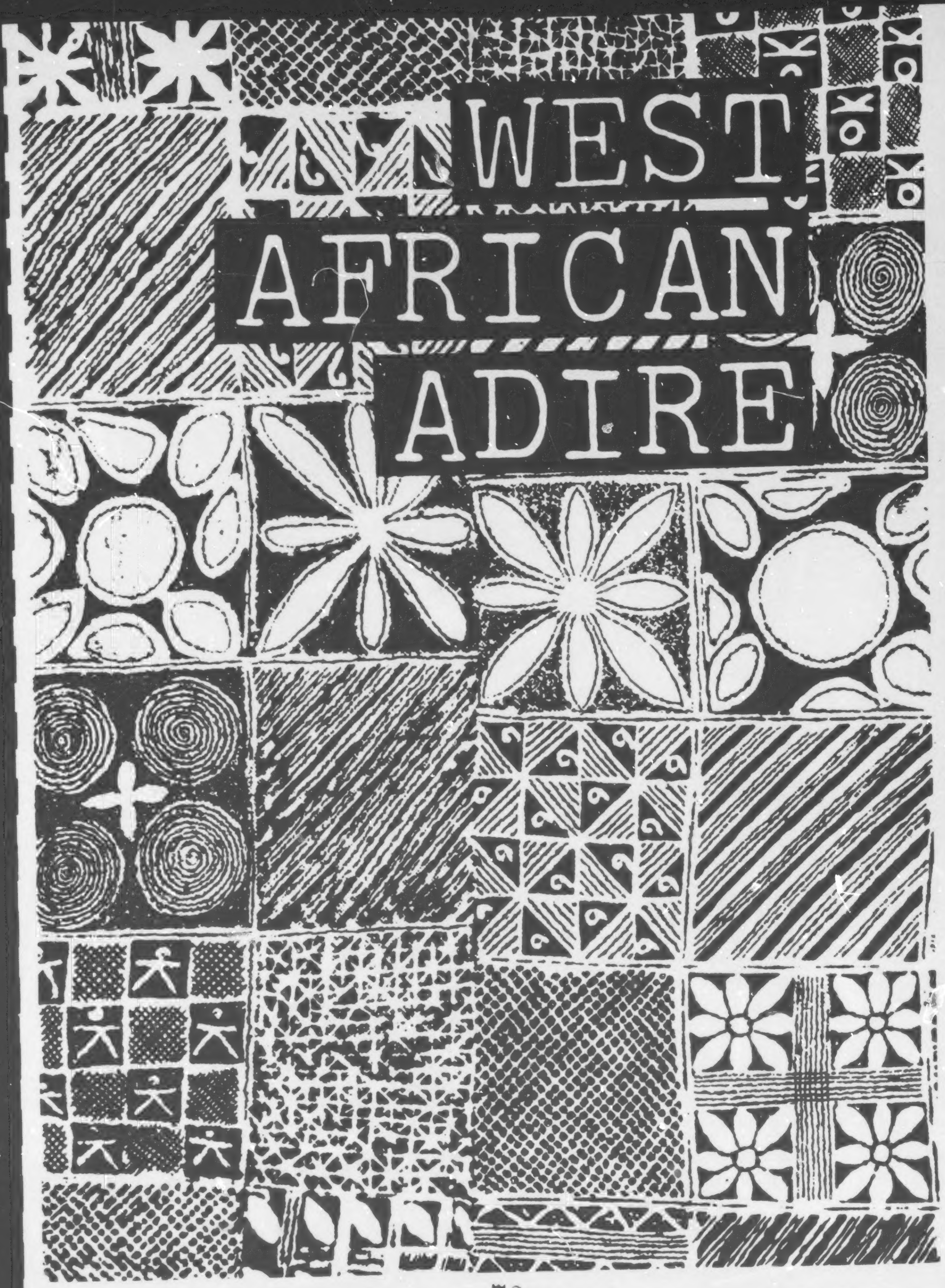
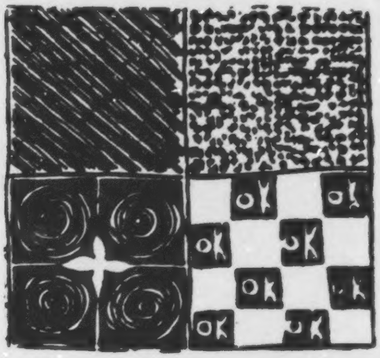
WEST AFRICAN ADIRE



DYED AND PRINTED TEXTILES

WEST AFRICAN ADIRE



Ethnographic Resources for Art Education
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Birmingham Polytechnic
Margaret Street
Birmingham B3 3BX

Cover illustration - detail of an Olokun cloth - see page 12

Researched & Written by Sue Burke

Photography, Illustration & Layout by Wade Turner

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and Barbara J Scanes

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DYED & PRINTED TEXTILES FROM JAVA, WEST AFRICA AND HOLLAND

How to use this pack

Dyed & Printed Textiles is the second in a series of teaching and learning materials produced by "The Art in Multicultural Society Project". The intention of this pack is to present in a readily accessible form dyed and printed textile techniques from a variety of cultures. We hope that this pack will contribute to the fostering of a multicultural approach to visual arts and crafts because we firmly believe that familiarity with other traditions enriches the potential for innovation in artistic as well as cultural terms within our society.

The pack is in three sections each associated with a particular country. Each section draws together both historical and ethnographic materials as well as the development of particular technical traditions. Each section may either be used on its own or in conjunction with either or both of the others. When used together these booklets illustrate the cross-fertilisation of cultures through trade and movements of people. Another way the materials may be approached is via the colour-coded sections employed in each booklet. The historical and ethnographic material pertinent to each culture is printed on a yellow background; the techniques and dyes are on blue and the uses of the textiles, clothing and designs are brought together in the section on a green background. This colour coding is designed to provide a number of different ways of cross referencing material.

The slides available with the pack provide a unique visual resource bringing together examples from National Museums and private collections as well as illustrating processes. The slides are anotated and explained in each section and are also referred to widely in the text.

We hope that you will find this pack sufficiently flexible to suit your particular needs. We would be most appreciative of any comments you might have regarding the packs reception and in particular any suggestions for improvement.

Nick Stanley

Phil Slight

Helga Loeb

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESOURCES
FOR ART EDUCATION

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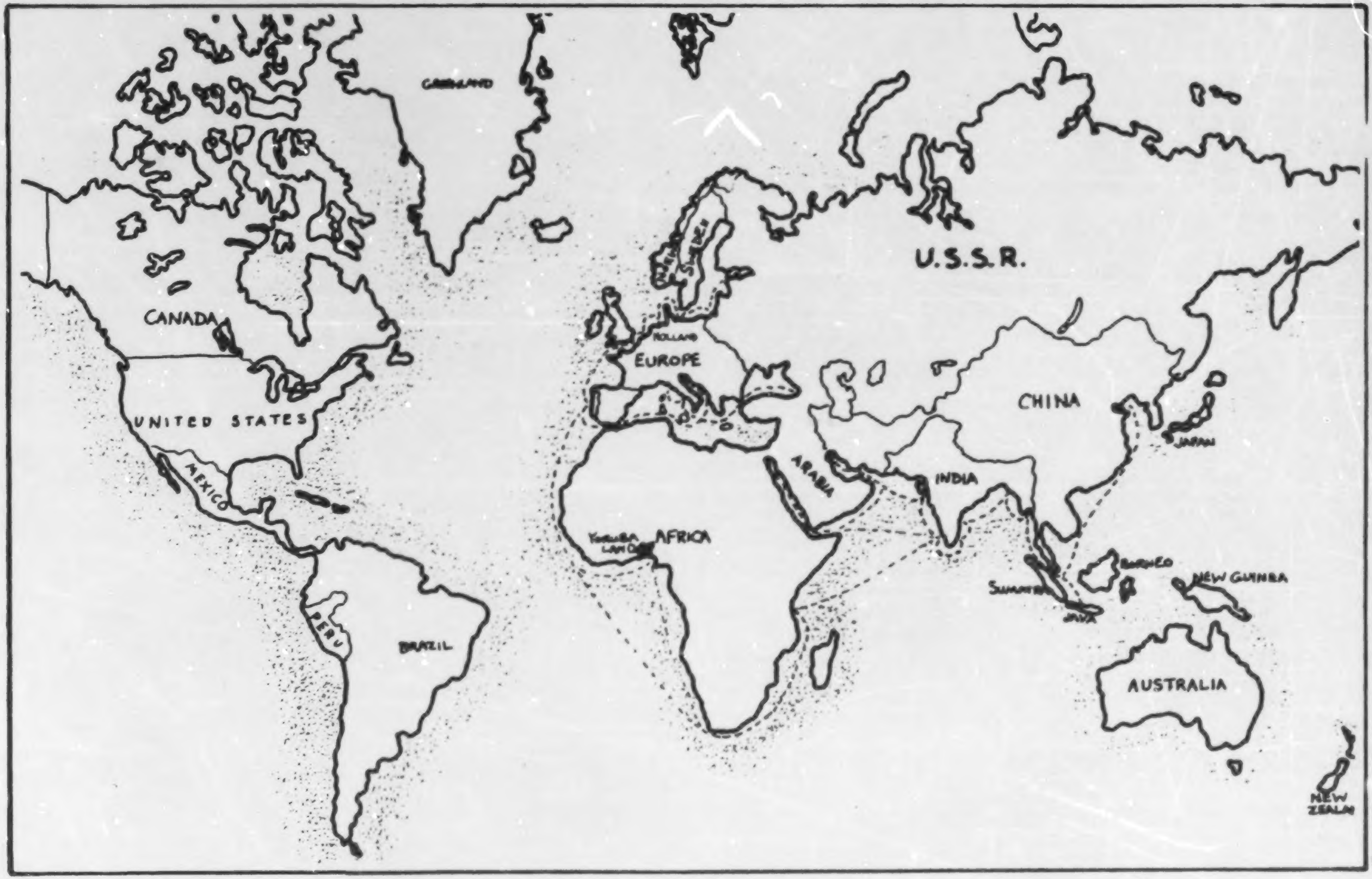
Mrs. Sheila Mackay of the Reading Room, Mr. Daniel Barrett and all the staff of the Museum of Mankind, Burlington Gardens, London.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INDIA
YORUBA LAND
AFRICA
BORNEO
NEW GUINEA
SUMATRA
JAVA
AUSTRALIA
NEW ZEALA

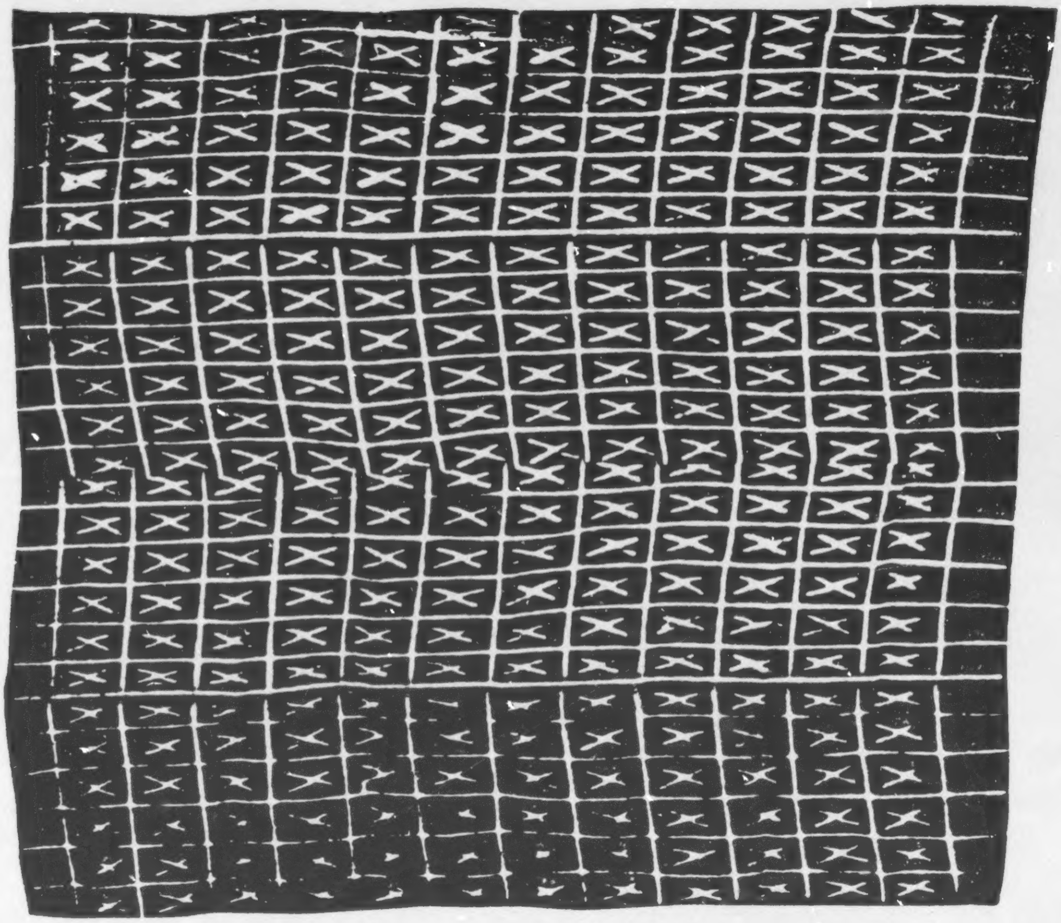
WORLD MAP

WEST AFRICAN TEXTILES

West Africa has an indigenous textile tradition which exists alongside other, imported textiles. Although a large variety of cloths is to be found in West Africa, they can be classified into three groups.

Firstly there is the general machine-made cloth, such as can be found all over the world. Secondly there are the 'country cloths', the home-dyed cloths such as adire, and the locally woven decorative fabrics. Lastly there are the gaily printed 'Java' or 'Holland' cloths for which there exists a large demand in West Africa. These cloths frequently remind one of Javanese batik designs and indeed were originally copied by the Dutch from the Javanese cloths they brought to Europe in the seventeenth century.

Although such cloths are now printed in Ghana, special virtue is attached to those made in Holland and Manchester.



AMUGA OR SCISSORS, FABRIC PLEATED AND FIRMLY MACHINE-STITCHED. ALSO USED IN CASSAVA-RESIST PATTERNS.

LAND AND PEOPLE

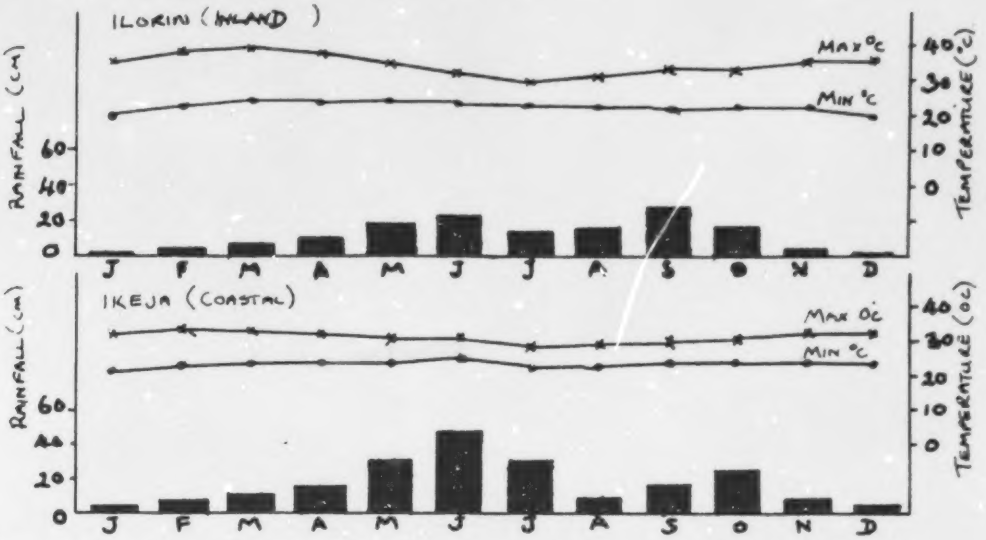
The Federal Republic of Nigeria is the largest of the West African coastal states, having an area of 356,699 square miles (923,773 square kilometres) - approximately four times that of the United Kingdom. Situated entirely within the tropics, between 4 and 14°N of the Equator, Nigeria is bordered to the South by the Gulf of Guinea, to the West by the Republic of Dahomey, to the North by the Republic of Niger and to the East by the Republic of Chad and Cameroon.

Modern Nigeria dates from 1914, when the two British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were joined. Independence was gained on October 1st 1960 and in 1963 it became a republic within the British Commonwealth. However, in January 1966 the government was overthrown by an army coup, and a Supreme Military Council took over. Civilian rule, under President Shagari was restored in October 1979, after 13 years of Federal Military governments.

Nigeria has an estimated population of 85 million, making it Africa's most populus state.(1) Over half of these people come from the Yorubas, the Hausas and the Ibos, the largest of over 2,000 ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Although English is the official language of Nigeria, about 395 different vernaculars are spoken across the country. Of these, Hausa is the most widely used, together with Yoruba and Ibo.

The 'Y' shape formed by the Rivers Niger and Benue divides Nigeria into three main areas, the northern, eastern and western regions. Each of these is dominated by one of the groups above: the Hausa in the north, the Ibo in the east and the Yoruba in the south-west.



Mean monthly rainfall and temperature for Yorubaland.

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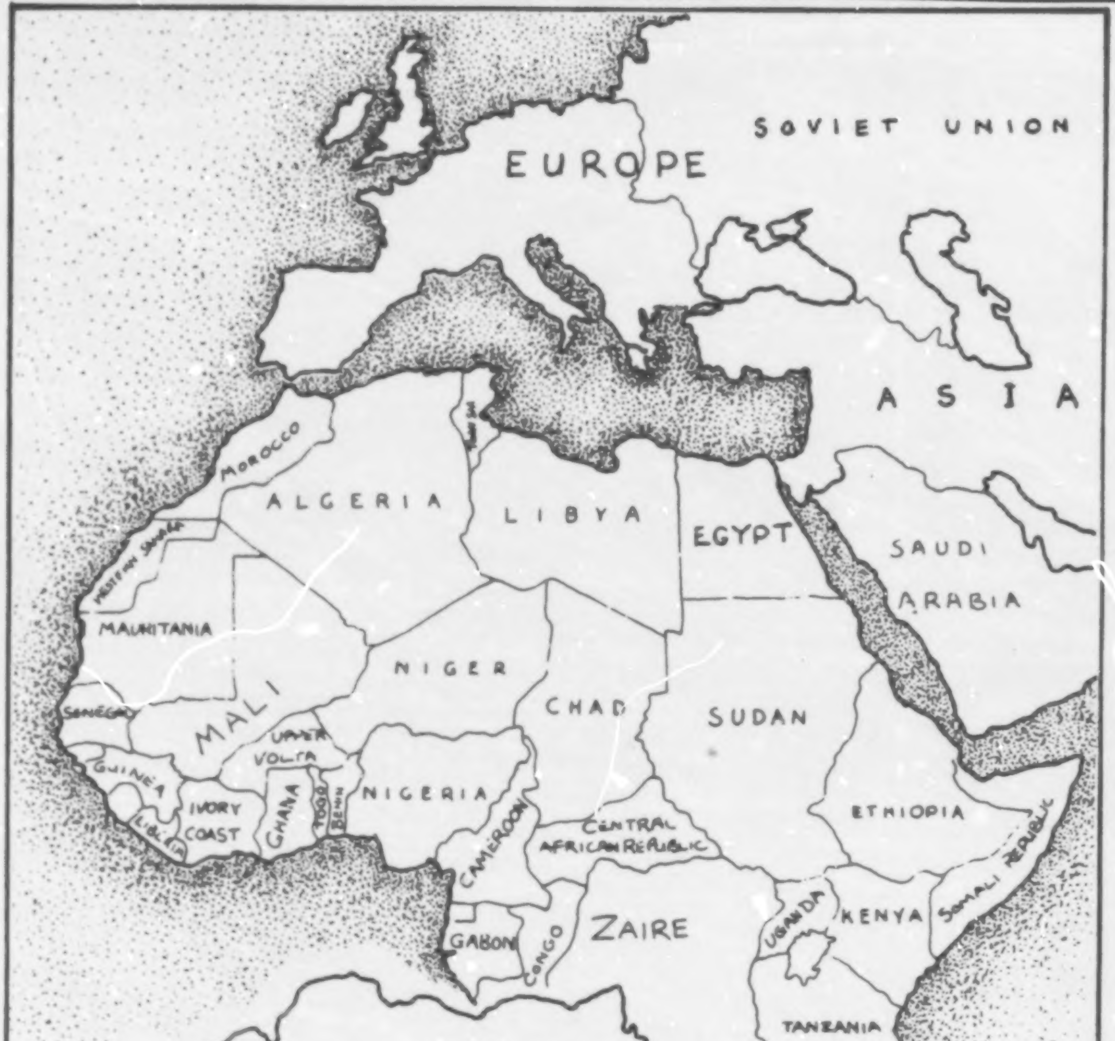
(1) There has not been an official census in Nigeria since 1963; the 1973 figures were repudiated by the government.


SOVIET UNION
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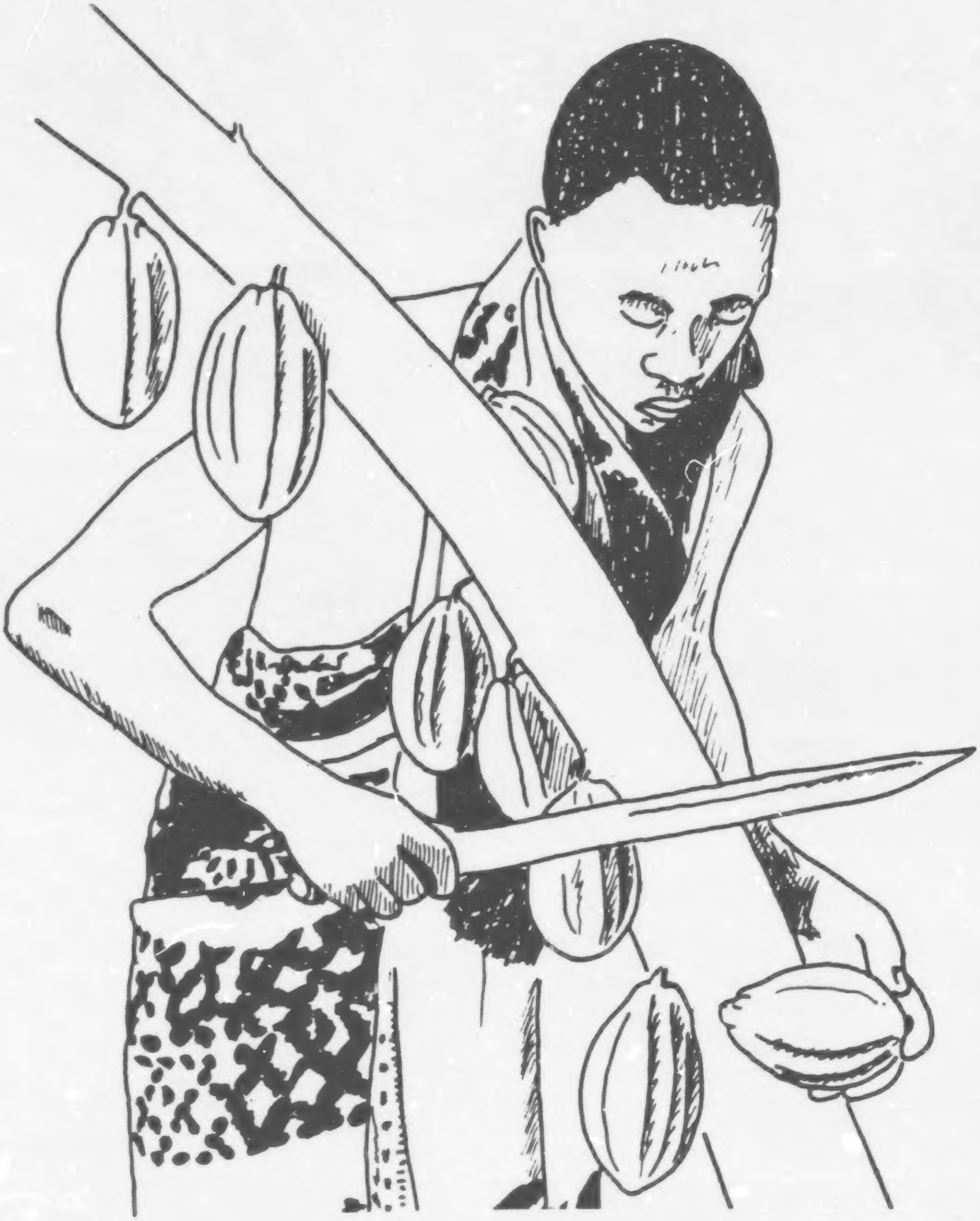
BOTSWANA
SOUTH AFRICA
TOGO
BENIN
NIGERIA
IBADAN
ENUGU
LAGOS
BENIN
▨ YORUBALAND

MAP OF AFRICA SHOWING DETAIL OF OF NIGERIA AND YORUBALAND.

CLIMATE

Like many tropical lands, Nigeria experiences several different climates, ranging from an equatorial one in the south, to semi-desert in the north (the Sahel). Both areas are subject to monsoonal rains, resulting in a distinct wet and dry season in the north (March to October, and October to March, respectively), and a more or less continuous wet season nearer the coast. The advance, and subsequent retreat of the rains are associated with the reversal of the seasonal wind systems from moist south-westerlies in the summer, to the dry 'Harmattan' from the north-east in the winter.



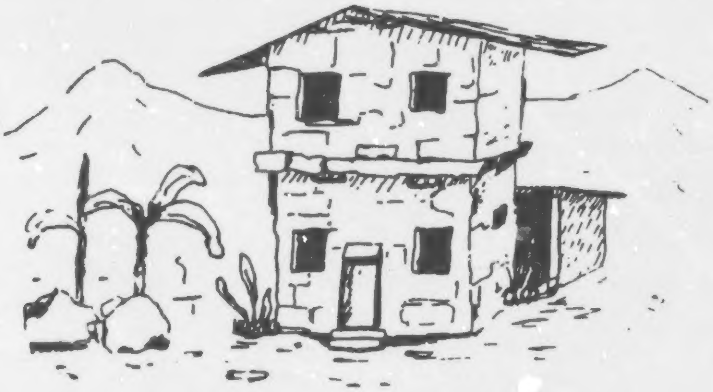
COLLECTING COCOA PODS.

This monsoon climate results in several characteristic features, notably an increase northwards in seasonal changes of temperature, humidity and rainfall. The coastal areas show little seasonal variability, whereas further north great contrasts are to be found, with the summer and winter conditions differing quite markedly. Consequently, rainfall is less in the north, while temperatures inland are higher. The mean temperature in Lagos on the coast is about 79°F (26°C) whereas in Ibadan it is 85°F (29.5°C).

These features are reflected in the northward changes in vegetation which, generally, becomes more sparse inland. Mangrove and freshwater swamps, occuring along the coast and in the Niger Delta, give way to tropical rain-forest, tropical grassland and arid, semi-desert in the far north.

Over half of the total land area is classified as being agricultural. The main crops include yams, cassava, cocoyams, kolanuts, bananas, plantains, while cocoa is the principal cash crop.

Minerals provide another source of income, oil, (Nigeria is the sixth largest producer in OPEC), natural gas, coal, tin and columbite being the most important. In terms of output, the major industries are textiles, tobacco and vegetable oils.



NIGERIAN RURAL DWELLING

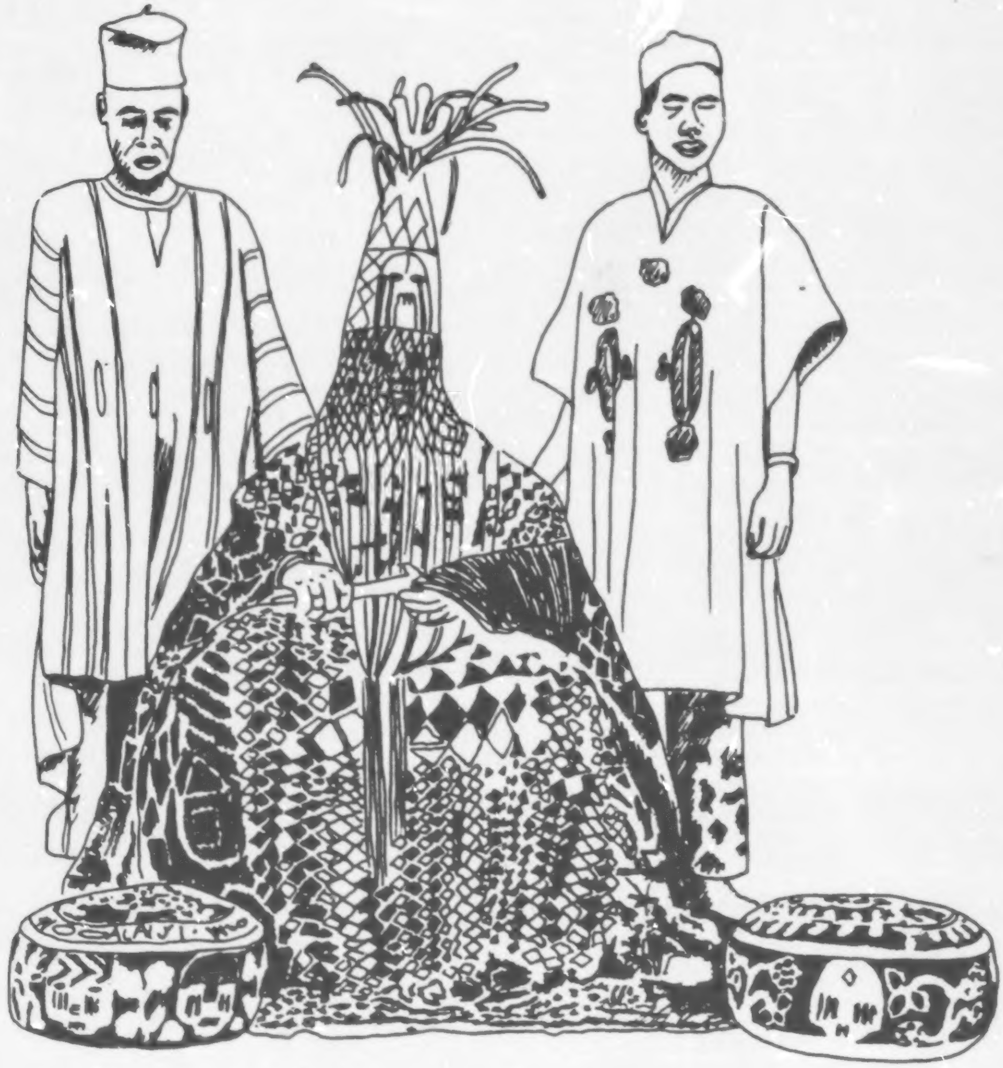
With the exception of the Yorubas, the Hausas and the Kanuris, Nigerians were not town-dwellers before the twentieth century. The basic type of settlement is now a large town surrounded by smaller villages. Villages, inhabited by people claiming a common ancestor, were made up of a number of compounds, where each compound enclosed by a wall of mud or concrete, housed one man, his immediate family and some relations.

Each village has a nominal chief or headman, who is usually one of the oldest men in the community.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many new towns were established, while older ones grew larger. Many like Lagos and Ibadan, were originally administrative centres, but have since become industrialised. Lagos, now the Federal Capital is the largest city in Nigeria, with a population of 1,600,000.

YORUBALAND

There has been much speculation as to the origins and prehistory of the people of West Africa. The Yoruba believe that their kingdom was the first to be created by the god, Oduduwa, when he climbed down from heaven to create land on the water below. Oduduwa is thought to be the first Yoruba king, and consequently established a large city at Ile Ife, the place where he had first climbed down from the sky. From Ife, Oduduwa's sixteen sons went off to found kingdoms of their own and to this day Yorubaland is divided into these kingdoms and is ruled by descendents of these first kings. One of the kingdoms thus established was that of Oyo.



AFRICAN KING IN CEREMONIAL DRESS.

The Yoruba kingdom of Oyo was once one of the most culturally brilliant and the most politically and militarily formidable kingdom in West Africa. It was a great empire in the fifteenth century when the Portuguese landed on the West African coast. Its political power was partly a reflection of its wealth, both as a producer of excellent textiles and as a merchant state strategically situated between the north and south of the country. In the 18th century much of Oyo's wealth came from participating in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

However, early in the 19th century, the empire of Oyo collapsed under the dual forces of war with the neighbouring kingdom of Dahomey, and with the fiercely Muslim Fulani from northern Nigeria. For the remainder of the century, Yorubaland was plunged into one war after another, until the British established control in the 1890's.

After Independence in 1960, the Yorubas became an important political force, and today the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) is seen as being their party. The UPN, with 138 seats in the Nigerian Assembly sees itself as the party in opposition and its leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was the runner-up in the Presidential elections of 1979.

Due to the export of cocoa, Yorubaland is now one of the most prosperous areas in West Africa, and the social and economic evidences of prosperity such as schools, hospitals and roads, are more highly developed than anywhere else in Nigeria.

Although they are predominantly an agricultural people, the Yoruba are urban dwellers, and nearly half live in towns of more than 5,000 people. The largest Yoruba towns are Ibadan, with a population of over one million, Ogbomosho with 380,000, Abeokuta with 222,000, Ife with 130,000 and Oyo with 112,000.

Each Yoruba group is ruled by an 'oba' who is supported by a council. Although Yoruba chiefs have now lost much of their old influence, the office of chief remains filled. Two of the most important figures are the 'Oni' of Ife, the accepted spiritual leader, and the 'Alafin' of Oyo, the traditional political leader. The new bureaucratic hierarchies have drawn educated Yoruba from both rich and poor families.

Nowadays, traditional deities have been displaced, and Christianity and Islam have almost equal numbers of adherents.

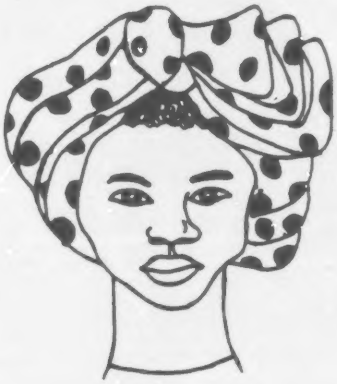
CLOTHING

Clothing has always been highly valued by the Yoruba, and nowadays the women are extremely fashion-conscious and reluctant to be seen wearing clothes with last year's design on them.

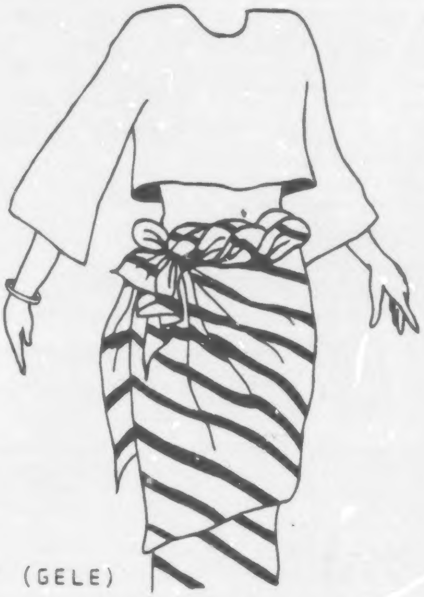
One type of cloth used for clothing is that known as adire cloth, the indigo dyed cloth which is so popular in Nigeria.

Adire cloth used to be worn only by the poorer sections of society and was looked down upon by the richer elements. However, since Independence there has been a return to things Nigerian, and adire cloths have become fashionable. They are either worn as traditional wrappers, head-ties and cover cloths, or else are made into European-style garments.

Traditionally, women's dress was less elaborate than that worn by men. Until the 1960's, colour and fabric were restrained, but with the growing emancipation of women, and the import into the country of a variety of European textiles at cheap prices, more elaboration has crept in. However, now that many Yoruba women are engaged in industry and the professions, they find it more convenient to wear European-style dress for work, and keep the more elaborate dress for parties and more formal occasions.



HEAD TIE.



BLOUSE (BUBA) AND WRAP AROUND SKIRT (GELE)

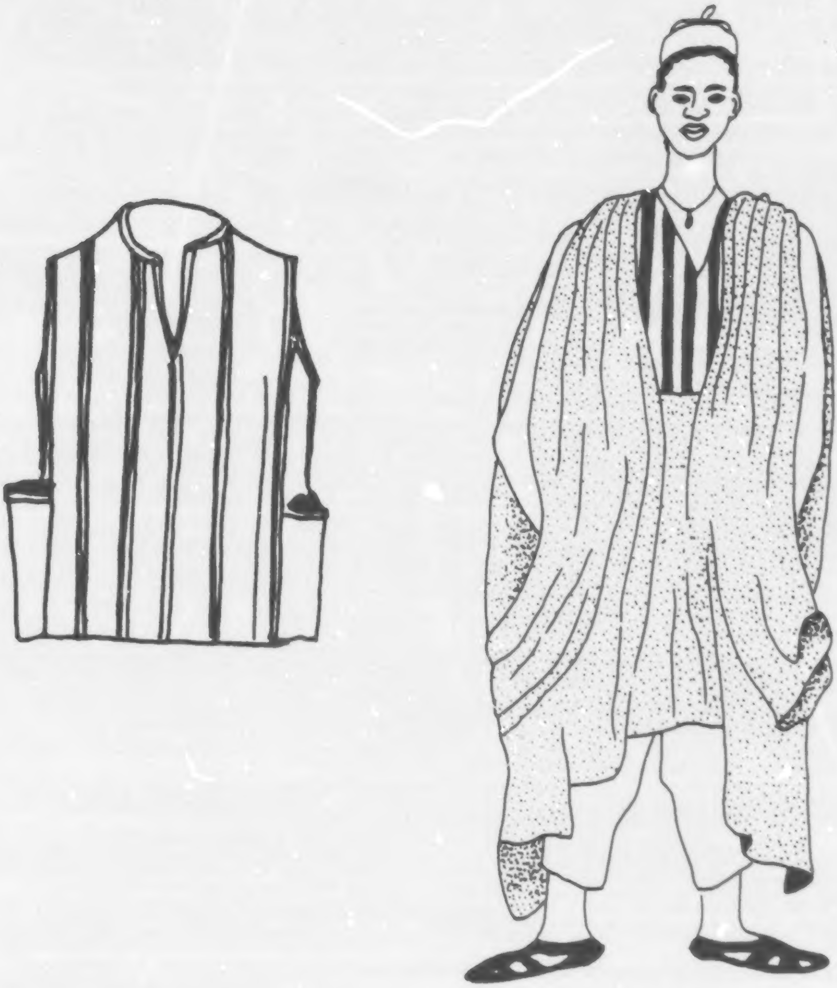
Full traditional dress consists of a blouse called a 'buba', an ankle-length wrap around skirt and a head-tie called a 'gele'. The buba was not always worn, but was introduced by missionary ladies in the nineteenth century, no doubt for reasons of modesty. It is a short, tunic-style blouse, without a shoulder seam and having a simple boat-shaped neck. The head-tie is lightly and deftly thrown into position, and twisted into the desired shape.

Country women may wear only the skirt-cloth, pulled up high over the breasts and tied with a scarf-like narrow cloth. They sometimes wear the head-tie but usually they remain bare-headed.

Although indigo-dyed cloths are the most popular, fast-dyed adire cloths are also fashionable, and fashion changes can be effected with the use of colour.

Traditional everyday wear for the older Yoruba men consists of a tunic-like shirt (the buba), a pair of fairly narrow trousers, (sokoto), and a light weight gown called a sapara. It used to be considered ill-mannered to go out without the covering-gown, but nowadays this is largely ignored, especially by younger men.

These three garments are made from matching patterned cloths, and are accompanied by a white beret or a subtly coloured felt fez-type hat.



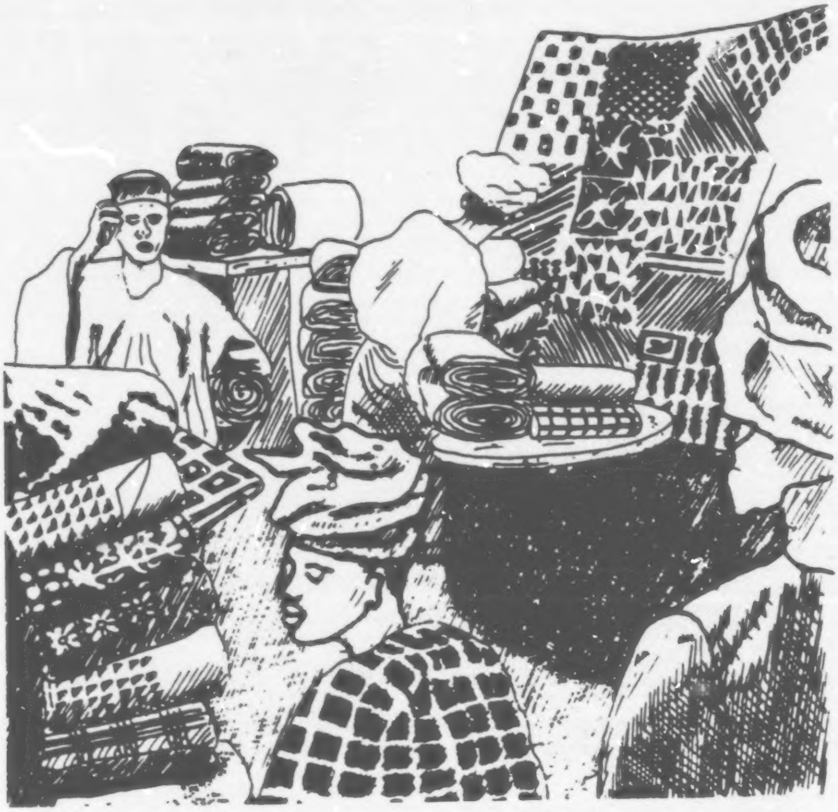
SHIRT (BUBA), TROUSERS (SOKOTO) AND GOWN (SAPARA).

USAGE AND DISTRIBUTION

Prior to being accepted as suitable material for clothing, adire was only useful as sleeping cloths for the menfolk. However, since the 'adire revolution' of the 1960's, the rate of production of the cloth has greatly increased. Nowadays, there is enough cloth produced in Abeokuta and Ibadan, both to satisfy local demand and to sell in markets all over Nigeria.

Market places are located in, or near, every type of settlement in West Africa, and they are still the main centres of retail selling in many countries. The sellers buy on a small scale from the manufacturer, and sell directly to the public. Markets are either held daily or else are held periodically, usually every five or nine days. One famous nine day market is that which is held at Oje in Ibadan.

Oje is the most important market for cloth, and is noted for its colour and bustle. Traders from all over Yorubaland come as far as a hundred miles in order to sell their cloth. Women traditionally have been the trade specialists, and the more astute travel the market circuit with their cloth.



MARKET SCENE.

MOTIFS

The patterns on indigo-dyed adire cloth are impressive, both for their large number and for their great variety. Every cloth has a name, as does every individual pattern on the cloth, but unfortunately at least three generations have passed since the creation of many of the designs and it is impossible to know how the originator saw them. It is only possible to see how they are interpreted today. Traditional designs are still highly valued and are still in demand for some village ceremonies, but each year new patterns come into vogue, and old ones are revived.

There appears to be a central stock of designs, which can be juggled around to form a different combination. The choice of subject matter varies from person to person, and learning to select motifs for a cloth is a skill acquired during the period of apprenticeship. To some extent, the cloth is made with the buyer in mind. If a particular design is selling well, then it is reproduced, although perhaps with slight variations. At other times, cloths are made to a personal order, and then the maker might be restricted by the buyer's choice.

Many motifs used are governed by mythology and folklore. Themes of Yoruba mythology find expression in stylized designs of lizards, turtles, snakes, birds, trees and even human beings. These designs are in praise of Oduduwa, whom the Yoruba see as being the creator of the world. Another example is the starch-resist adire cloth called 'Olokun',* designed to honour the goddess of the sea. This is a very popular pattern, and since each woman paints her own cloth no two are exactly the same.

The style of the painter and the care she has taken in executing the design both contribute to the cloth's individuality.

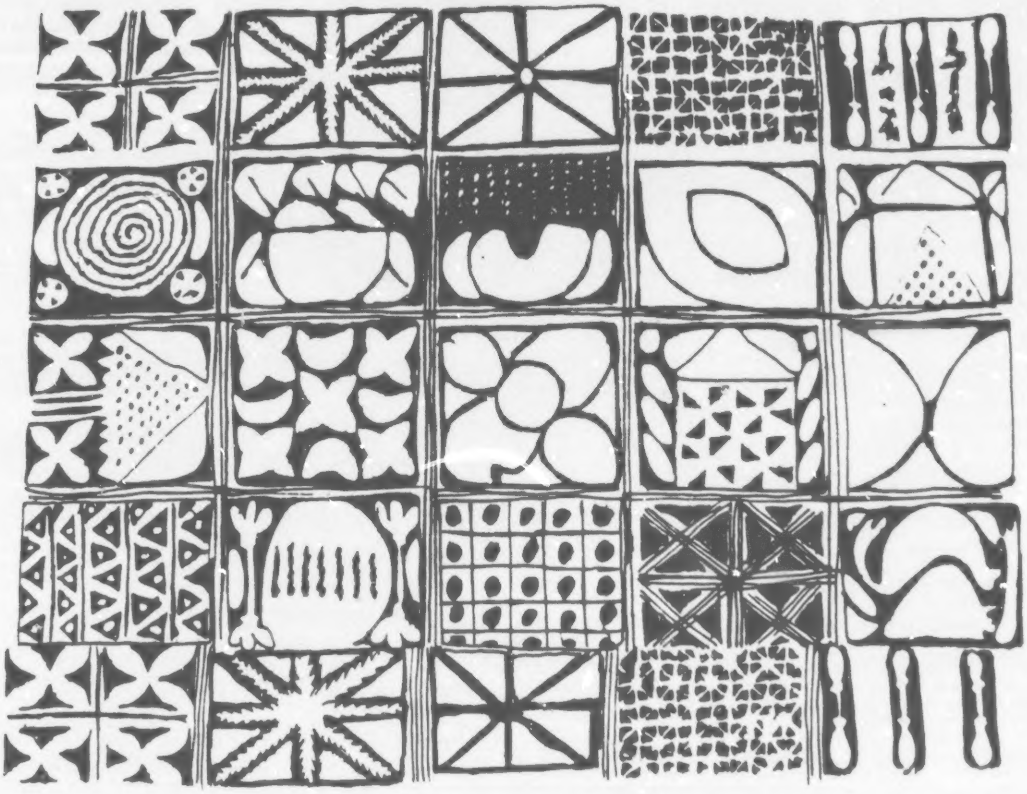
Each half of the Olokun cloth is composed of two rows, each of five squares, with a row of small rectangles around the perimeter of the cloth. Some of the motifs within the squares are geometric shapes, whilst others represent every-day objects such as four-legged stools, spinning tops, plantains, matches and chicken wire. Sometimes 'OK' is a motif.

Another popular design praises Ibadan, the centre of hand-painted cloths. 'Ibadandun' is the name of this cloth and it means 'Ibadan is sweet'. It is divided into four rows of seven squares or rectangles, and the range of patterns in Ibadandun. However, like the Olokun, no two cloths are the same, and the best cloths are those bought straight from a compound in Ibadan. On some cloths the number of repeated patterns are greater than on another, and the designs vary according to the version taught to the painter by her mother.

* See cover illustration.

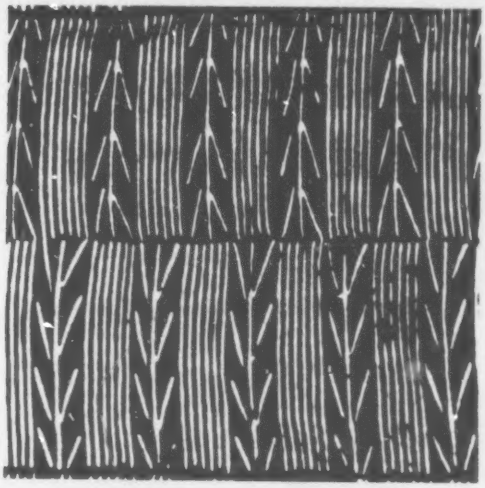
One motif which must always appear is that which gives the cloth its name. It is composed of pillars interspersed with spoons. The pillars represent Mapo Hall, a neo-classical building which stands on a hill in the centre of Ibadan, and serves as the Town Hall. The number of spoons determines the price of the cloth. The best cloths have five spoons, four is average and cloths for tourists have only three. In other squares, the motifs are similar to those found in 'Olokun' cloths, in the sense that they portray animals and everyday objects found in and around the compound.

Adire cloths are also designed to commemorate special events in the history of the people. There are cloths to commemorate Independence Day, to celebrate the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to the country in 1956 and to celebrate the success of a political party at the polls. One of the best known examples of such cloths is a stencilled pattern, copied from a medallion which marked the 1935 Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. Events such as the death of an important figure are recorded on cloths, and serve to keep the memory of a man fresh in the minds of the people. Another stencilled cloth, made to celebrate the release from prison in 1966 of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the acknowledged leader of the Yoruba, was only available for the few months immediately following his release. The Yoruba words on the cloth are 'Kabo eku atijo Awolowo' meaning "Welcome Awolowo, it has been a long time".



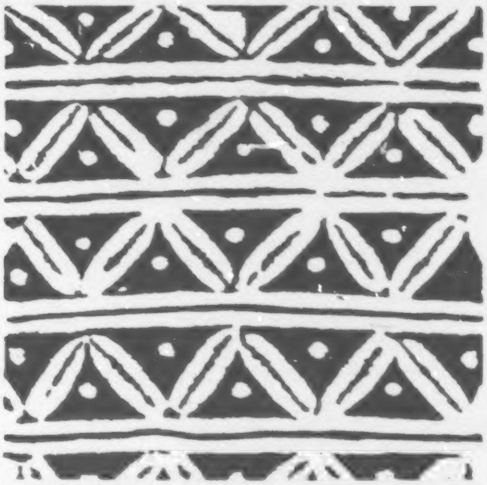
SECTION OF 'IBADANDUN' CLOTH.

Chieftancy Tree - 'igi oye'.



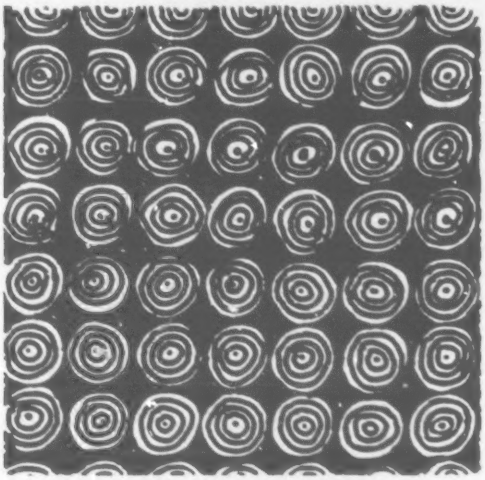
This is a fairly recent design from Abeokuta, and represents a tree that produces something saleable - perhaps the cloth? The V shapes represent the branches, and the straight line the trunk.

Plantain - 'agbagba'.



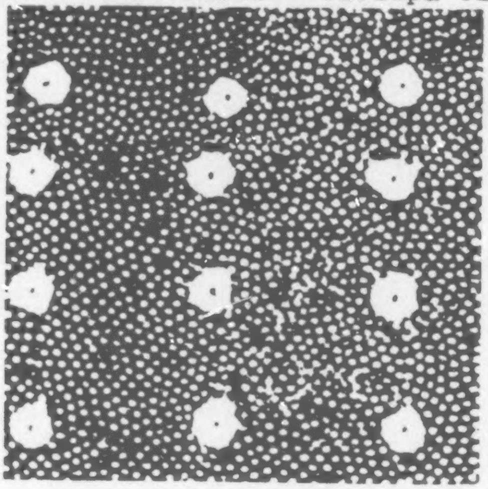
The name of this cloth comes from the similarity of the diagonals to plantains. The fruit of the plantain looks very much like a large banana, and is one of the main foods in Nigeria and other tropical countries.

Tops - 'olokoto'.



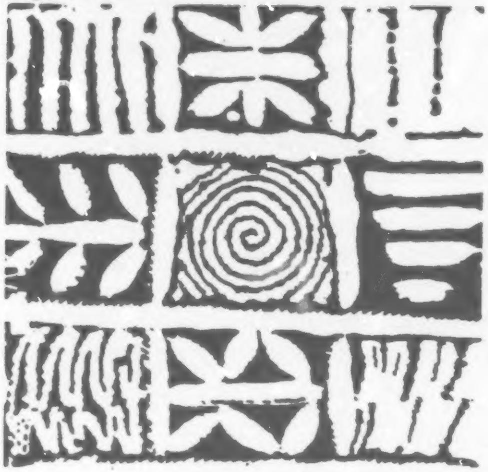
The name means literally "the one with the Snails' shell". Snail's shells are used as spinning tops in Nigeria, hence this cloth's name. Snails are a great delicacy and can always be bought in the markets.

Moon and Fruits - 'olosupa eleso'.



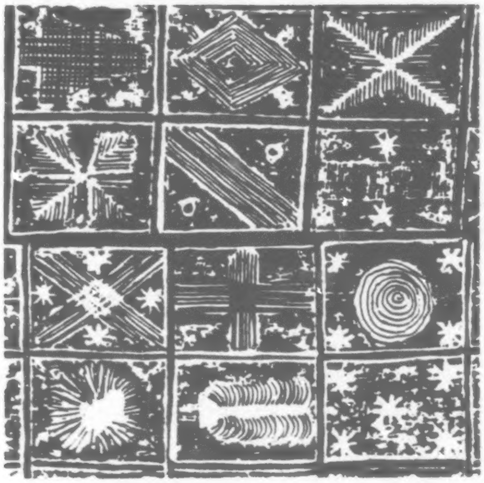
This is one of the most common adire patterns, and can always be found in the markets. The fruit refers to the early method of tying small seeds into the circles, and the moons are the large white circles.

Agosofin.

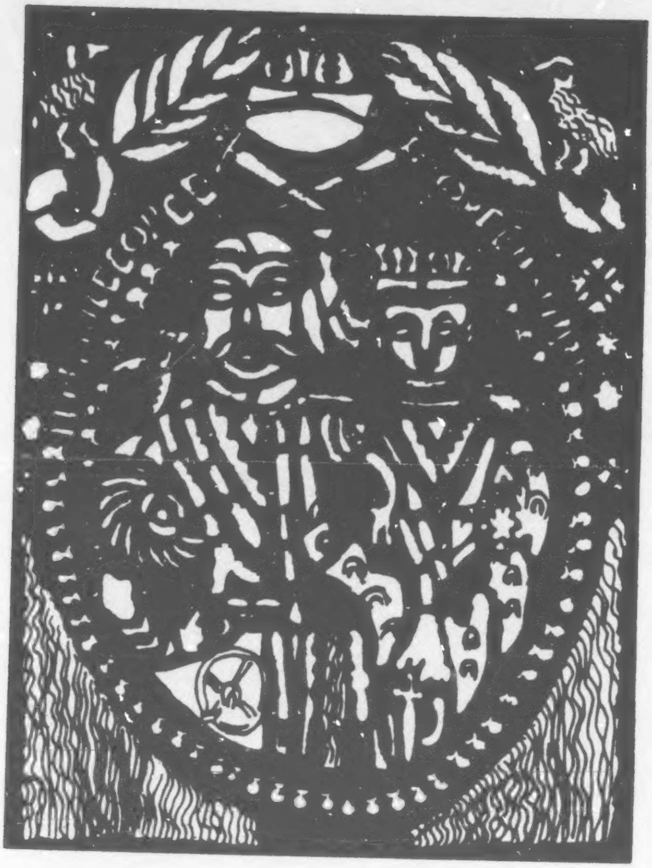


Agosofin patterns seem to have no meaning, and are purely decorative. They are very attractive and are very especially popular in Abeokuta.

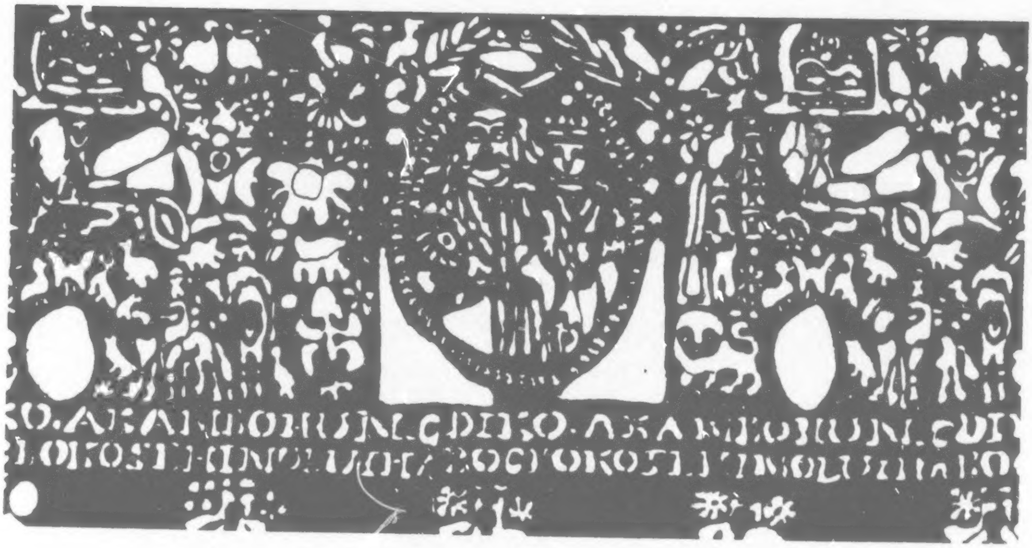
Sunbebe.



The literal translation of the name is 'lifting up of the beads'. Young girls used to wear beads around their hips and whilst they were dancing the beads would move up and down. The beads were especially worn by girls who were to be married, in a private ceremonial dance performed before their future husband. The connection between the cloth and its name is the background of little circles or beads. This pattern has existed for about 30 years, but because it involves such careful painting it is not a common one.



DETAIL FROM JUBILEE CLOTH



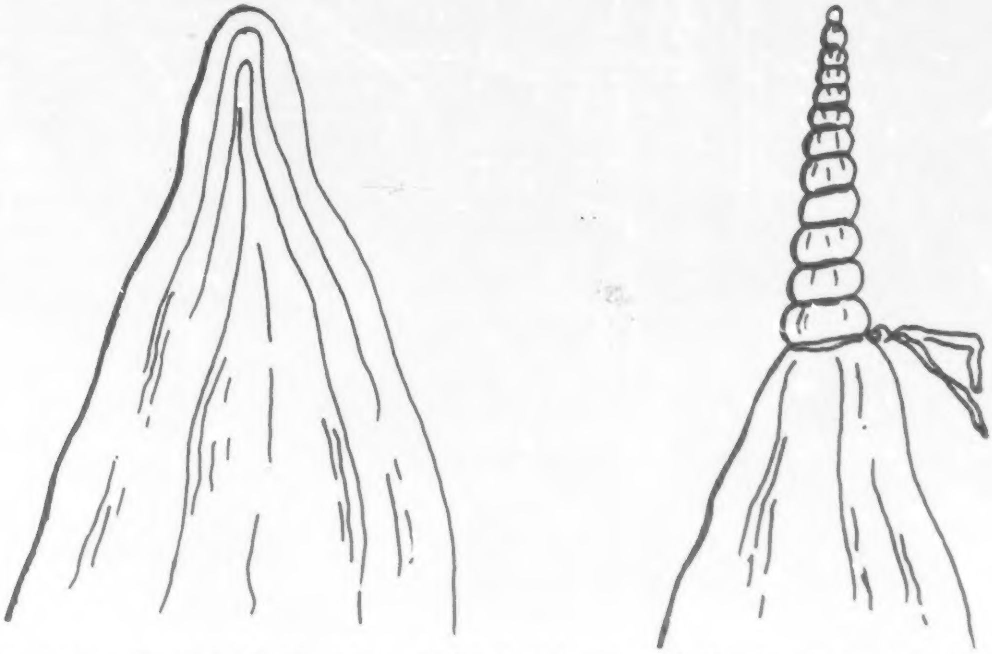
STENCILLED STARCH RESIST JUBILEE CLOTH

PROCESS

Pattern-dyeing with indigo is a technique used by several peoples in West Africa, but has perhaps been most perfected by the Yoruba. Thousands of women are engaged in making these cloths, known as adire, and are managing to survive in the face of competition of imported European cloths. Nowadays they use imported white shirting and cloth made in Nigerian factories.

There are two ways of preparing adire cloths. The first method consists of sewing or tying various parts of the cloth before dyeing. In this way, patches of the cloth remain white when it is dipped in indigo dye. The second method involves painting a pattern on the cloth using starch. The starch acts as a resist to the dye, and the pattern again appears white on a blue background.

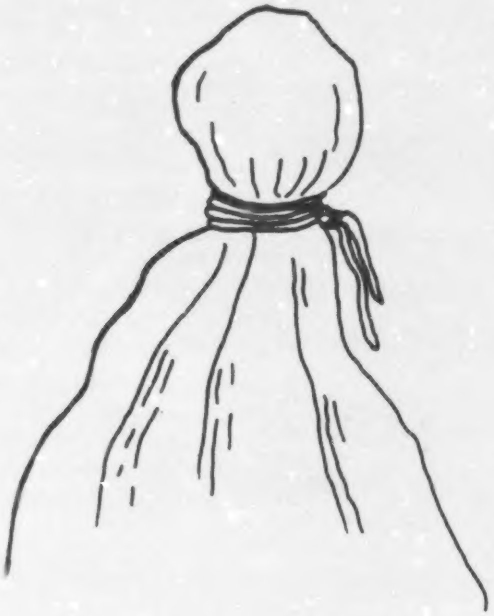
In the first method the resist is either raffia or cotton thread. The cloth can be tied in preparation for dyeing (adire oniko) or else the design can be stitched onto the cloth (adire alabere). In the second method, called adire eleko by the Yoruba, the resist is starch made from cassava cloth, or applied through a stencil which has been cut into a specific design.



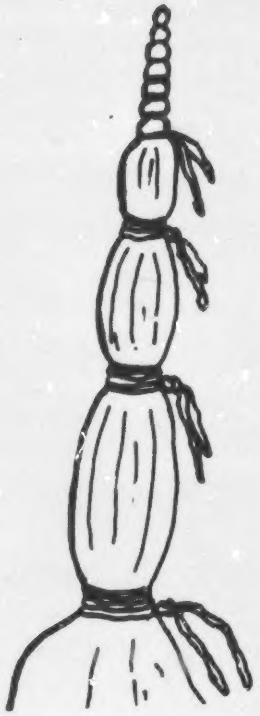
FABRIC IS SMOOTHED DOWN FROM A POINT AND TIED IN CONCENTRIC CIRCLES.

TYING

Tying the cloth can be done in many different ways. It is the placing of the ties which determines the resulting pattern onto the fabric; the most common shape used being that of a circle.



TYING USING A STONE



WIDER CIRCLES.

When a cloth is bunched up into little peaks and bound tightly with raffia, the result, after dyeing, is a pattern of white spots on the dyed background. A skilled craftsman can twist the raffia in such a way that the spot becomes a square, or oblong. If the cloth is bound with several parallel bands of fibre below the peak, a number of concentric circles are obtained. It can take up to about four hours to tie a cloth.

When seeds, or small stones are tied into the cloth, to produce a spotted effect, the method is known as adire eleso (eleso means seeds).

Raffia-tied cloths are often made by small girls, aged between ten and twelve years old. They have to make two identical cloths as they are stitched together and sold as one.

METHOD

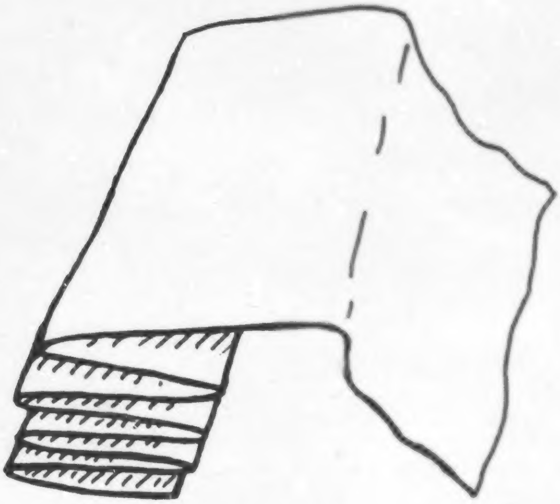
First, the material is dampened, and is folded into two. Then, while the cloth is being tied the right side is kept on the outside.

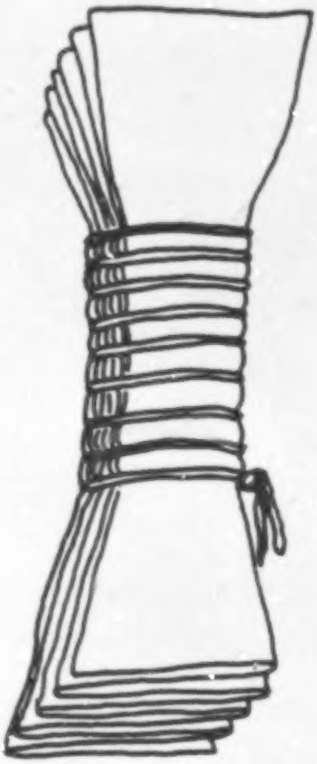
The centre of the circle to be tied is marked with a spot, which is picked up in one hand while the cloth is smoothed down away from it. The binding thread is then wrapped around the smoothed cloth, with the end of the thread left loose, to be tied to the other end when the binding is completed. Both ends are then cut.

When small circles or spots are bound closely together on a cloth, the binding thread is carried from spot to spot.

It is of the utmost importance that the ties on the cloth be tight enough to prevent the dye from seeping beneath them.

Other cloths are folded before being tied. The simplest form of folded design is done on narrow strips of fabric, where the strip is folded over and over into narrow pleats until it resembles a small bundle, which is then tied tightly. Sometimes a mallet is used to press the pleats.



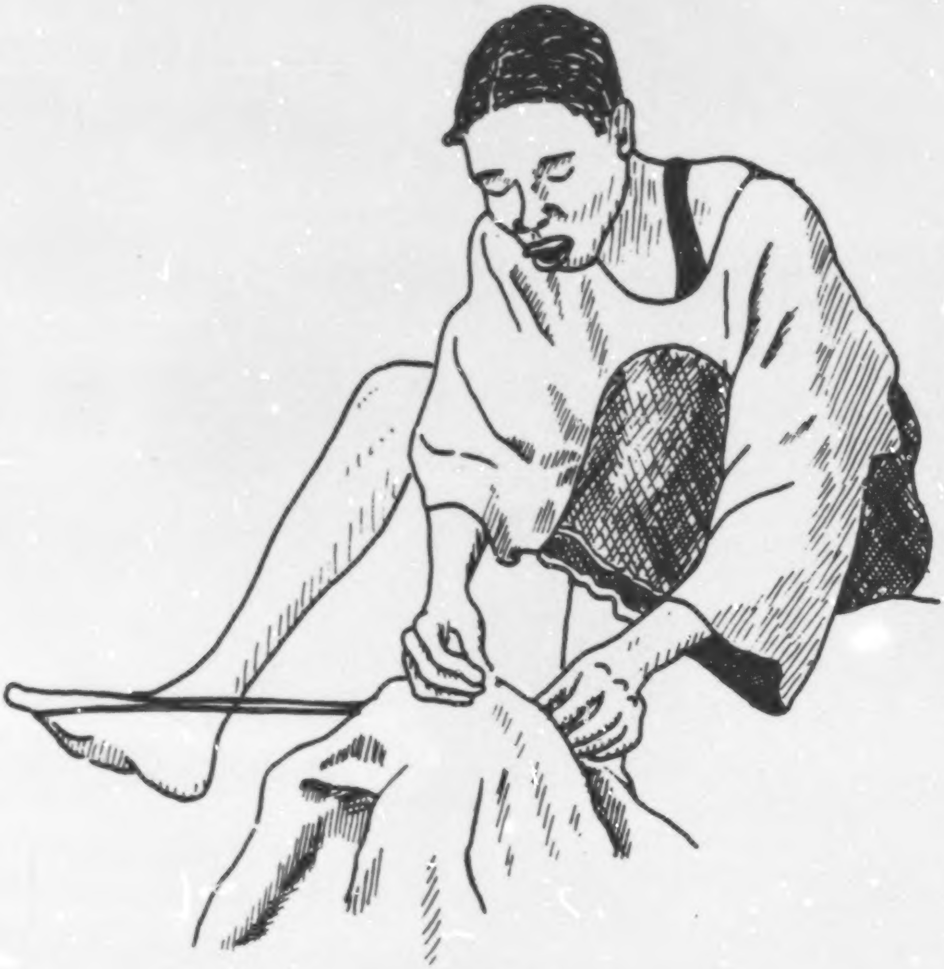


FOLDING AND TYING FABRIC.

STITCHING

Stitched adire is one of the oldest forms of Yoruba resist-dyeing in Nigeria. A running-stitch may be used to make an outline of a design or an over-stitch may be used on the fold of a pleat or on a tuck. Cotton thread, rather than raffia is used when a finer stitch is required.

The cloth must be held taut while the stitching is being done. This is generally achieved by pinning one end of a length of raffia to the cloth, whilst the other end is tied to the sewer's big toe. Then by stretching out her feet, she can make an improvised frame for herself.

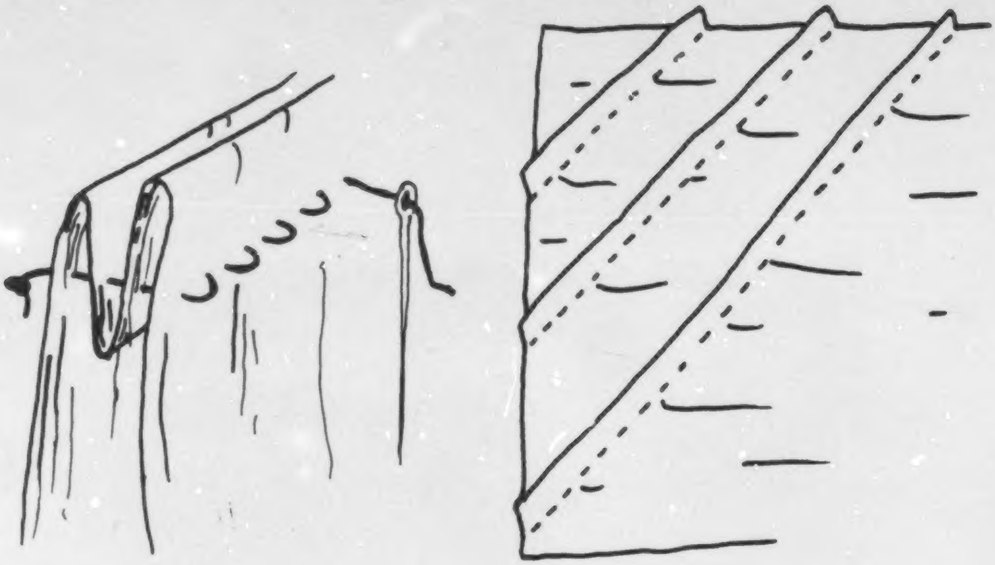


SEWING FABRIC.

The stitches can either be left flat or gathered up, depending upon the pattern required; in the latter case the material must be drawn up very tightly so that the dye cannot penetrate into the folds, and therefore it is also important to use a strong thread which will not break.

Sometimes red cotton is used for sewing, giving a stained outline to the pattern. Although it later washes out, it provides an attractive finish that may help to sell the cloth.

The advent of sewing machines has led to a whole new series of designs, since a machine is capable of finer stitches.



DIFFERENT METHODS OF SEWING FABRIC.

STARCH-RESIST CLOTHS

Starch-resist cloths, called adire eleko, are said to be more recent in origin than the tie-dye cloths. In Ibadan, the chief centre of starch painting, the starch is made from a mixture of cassava flour and water, though in some places yam flour is used. When the mixture is boiled, alum is added so that the starch will not dissolve in the dye-bath.

There are two methods of applying the starch to the undyed fabric. It can either be painted on or applied through a stencil. Designs are drawn freehand by women and girls, using a palm-leaf rib or a feather. The cloth is painted on one side only and great care must be taken to prevent the starch from cracking, or the dye will seep through. The painter puts her signature, or her trade mark, on the cloth so that it can be easily identified when it comes out of the dye-bath.

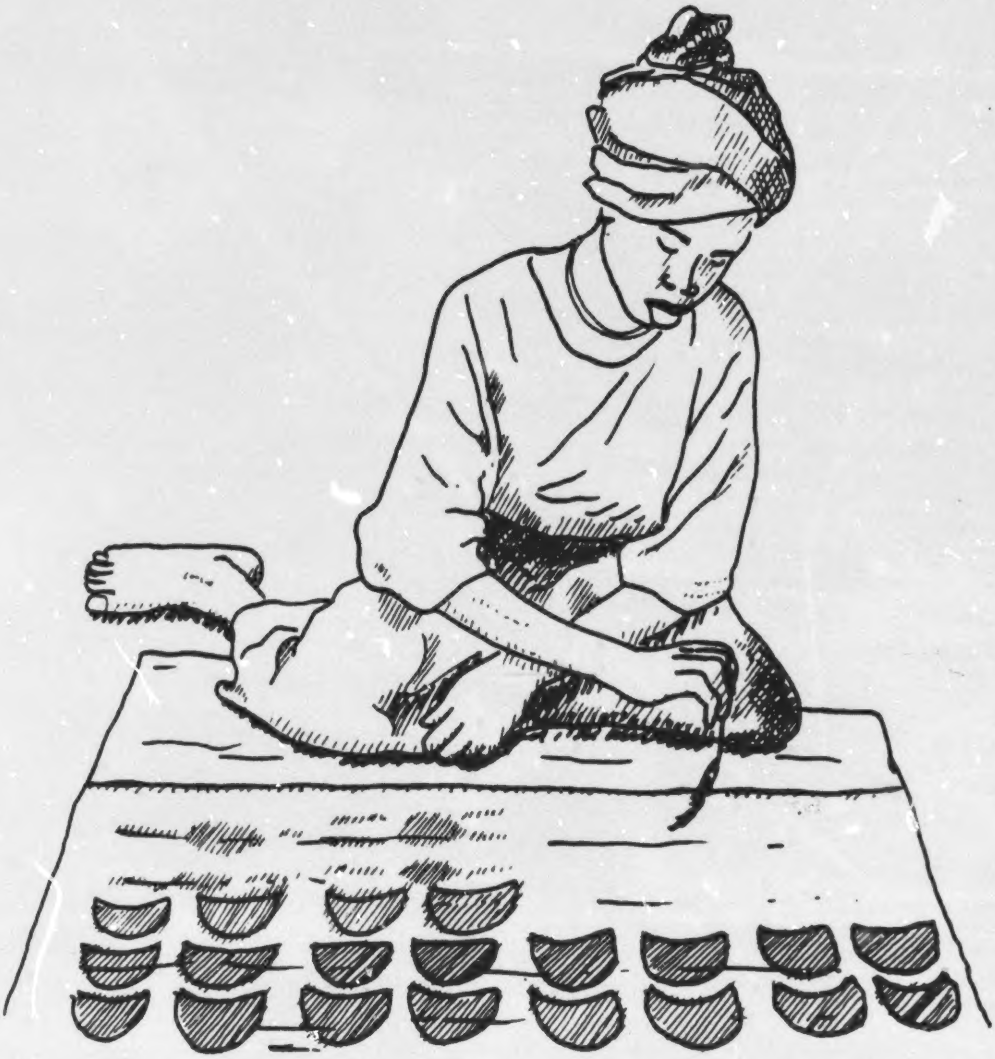
Although the hand-painted cloths are more time-consuming to make than the stencilled ones, the method does allow for more imagination and creativity in pattern design.

Starch, too, is applied to the cloth with the help of a stencil. The stencil is laid upon the cloth and starch is spread on the exposed part using a piece of wood. The stencil is then repositioned and the process repeated.

The stencilling and stencil cutting are done be men, as is the machining on the adire alabere cloths. Nowadays the stencils are cut from thin sheets of zinc, but previously the metal linings of old packing cases were used.

The designs on stencilled cloths are less traditional than the hand-painted, starch-resist cloths, and some may even be adapted from European painting, although it is unlikely that this method was introduced by the Europeans.

Stencilling is not confined to undyed white cloth, but is also used on factory-printed fabrics to subdue the colours in the original pattern.

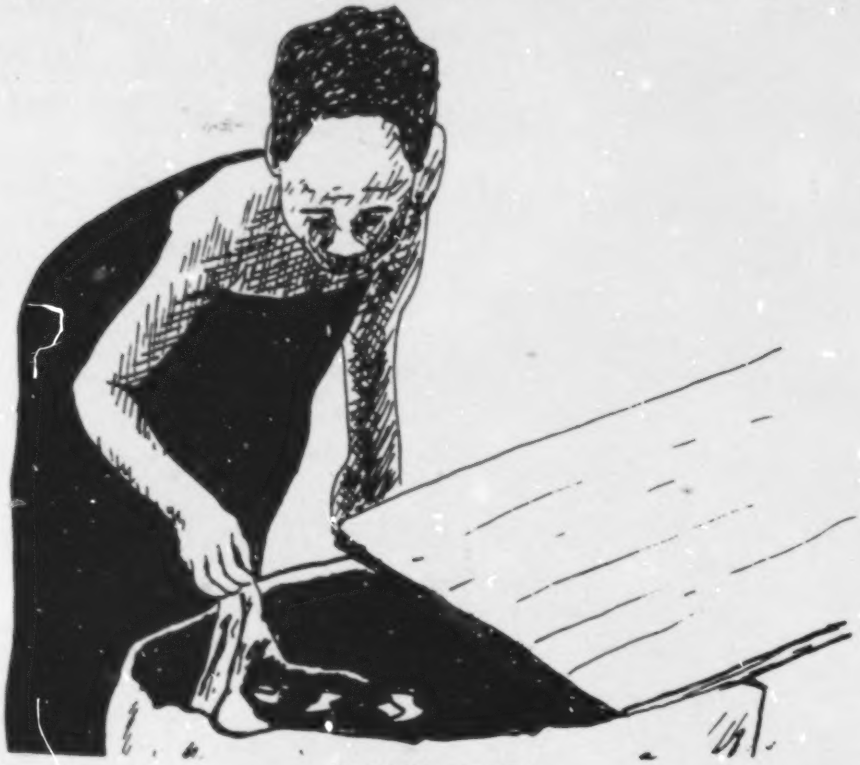


PAINTING STARCH-RESIST ONTO CLOTH.

DYEING

After the cloth has been tied, sewn, stencilled or painted, it is ready for dyeing, which is always done by women in Western Nigeria and by men in the North.

It is common to find several dyers working together, the majority of whom are older women, but there are often some young apprentices with them. Since dyeing is an inherited craft the apprentice is usually one of the family.



DYEING CLOTH.

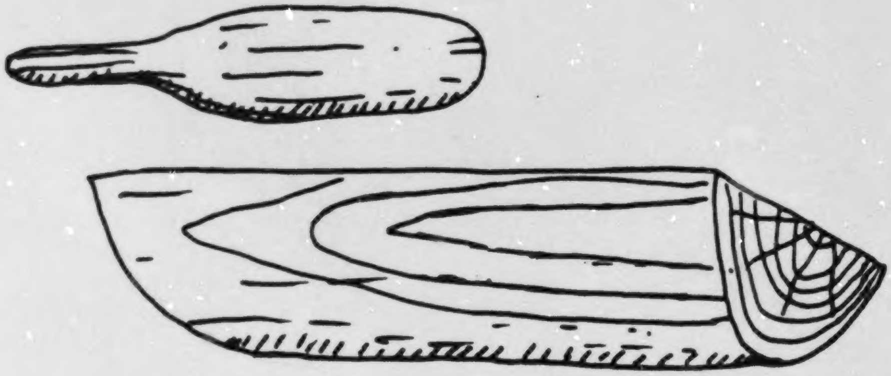
The cloths are dyed in large earthenware pots which are sunk a small way into the ground to prevent them from tipping over. The process of dyeing is always carried out in the shade, and the pots kept covered. The dyer is always careful to keep the pots very clean, otherwise the quality of the dye will be effected. Indigo dye will only keep well for about five days, after which it develops an unpleasant smell.

The indigo leaves to be used are moulded into balls. The number of balls which are needed for each cloth varies according to the depth of colour required. The almost black shades, so admired by the Yoruba, need up to 150 balls, whereas about 50 are more usually used. The mordant water (see Dyes & Dyemaking) is poured over the dye, and after stirring the dye, the pot is left covered for about three days. At the end of this period, when the dye is blue and frothy, with small fragments of leaf-fibres floating on the surface, it is ready for use.

The different types of adire cloths require individual handling in the dye pot. Stitched and tied cloths can be dipped in the dye and squeezed gently by hand before being lifted out to dry. Starch-resist cloths must be handled carefully so that the starch is not disturbed, and they are always dyed in a cold solution.

Each cloth is immersed in the dye and held for about two minutes, after which it is lifted out onto a board and left to drain, before being redipped. This process is repeated until the desired shade is acquired.

Once the cloths are dry, the resist must be removed. The starch is scraped off after the cloths have first been hung over a bamboo pole and soaked with water. The threads are removed from the dyed and stitched cloths, although some are often left in the stitched adire to assure the buyer that they are getting a new cloth. The cloth beneath the resist is left white, and at this stage it can be dipped again, so that the pattern does not form such a sharp contrast against the deep indigo.



MALLET AND BLOCK FOR BURNISHING CLOTH AFTER DYEING.

When the cloths are first brought out of the dye, they are a greenish colour, but they soon change to blue. A valued sign of true indigo dyeing is the metallic sheen a cloth should have when dry, and if the dyer thinks that the sheen is not thick enough she may paint extra dye onto the cloth as it hangs out to dry. Finally the cloths are beaten with a heavy wooden mallet to preserve the sheen.

The cloths are so overloaded with dye, that the colour pours out with the first washing. However, once the excess dye is removed, and providing that the cloth has been dyed properly, the colour will remain fast.

Nowadays, many younger people prefer to use synthetic indigo, and the dyeing is not always done in pots, but in enamel basins instead.

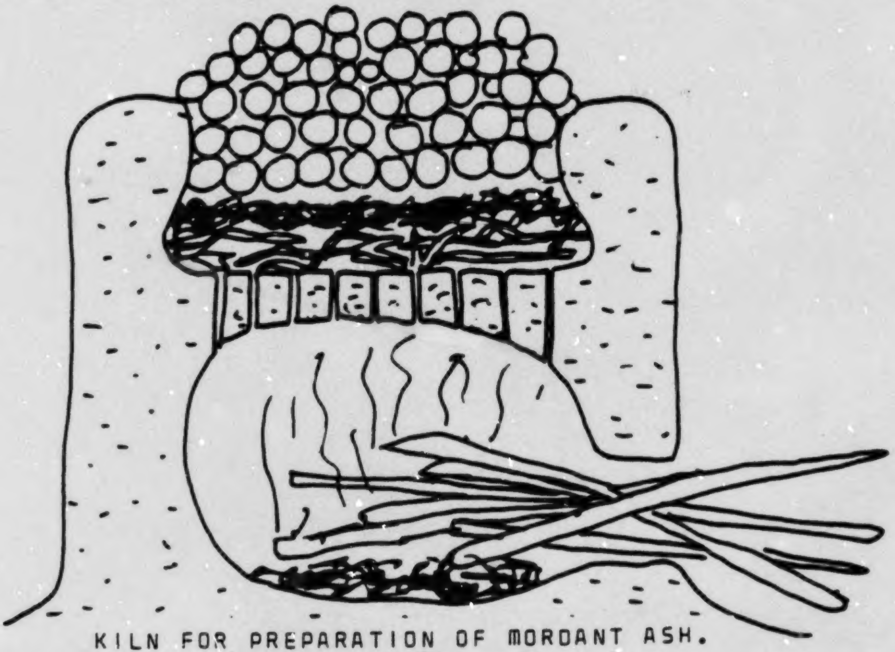
DYES AND DYEMAKING

Indigo dyeing, as practised by the Yoruba illustrates a developed use of materials found in the environment. Indigo is obtained from the leaves of the Lonchocarpus Cyanescens and from the leaves of the Indigofera Tinctoria, both of which grow wild in Yorubaland. Yoruba dyers prefer to use the leaves of the Lonchocarpus because they regard it as providing the more permanent dye.

The preparation of indigo dye is a lengthy and complicated process and this has led to the use of synthetic indigo by some younger dyers. The dye is obtained by a twofold process; the breaking up of the plant structure to facilitate the fermentation process, and the preparation of the alkaline solution, which helps release the blue dye and acts as a mordant to fix the dye colour to the cloth.

The fresh green leaves of the plant are pounded in a mortar, and the blue-black pulp is moulded into balls. These are allowed to dry in the sun for two to three days, during which time fermentation begins.

The preparation of the potash for the alkaline solution is more complex. Dry wood is collected to fire a specially constructed open-topped kiln. Short lengths of very green wood are laid across a perforated shelf near the top of the kiln. Wood-ash, taken from the cooking fire, is moulded into balls using water from an old dye-pot, and is placed on top of the green wood. The kiln is fired for between ten and twelve hours, and is then left to cool for three days. The ashes from the sticks, the ash balls and the kindling wood, are all mixed together and moulded into balls, again using old dye water. They are then left to dry in the sun.

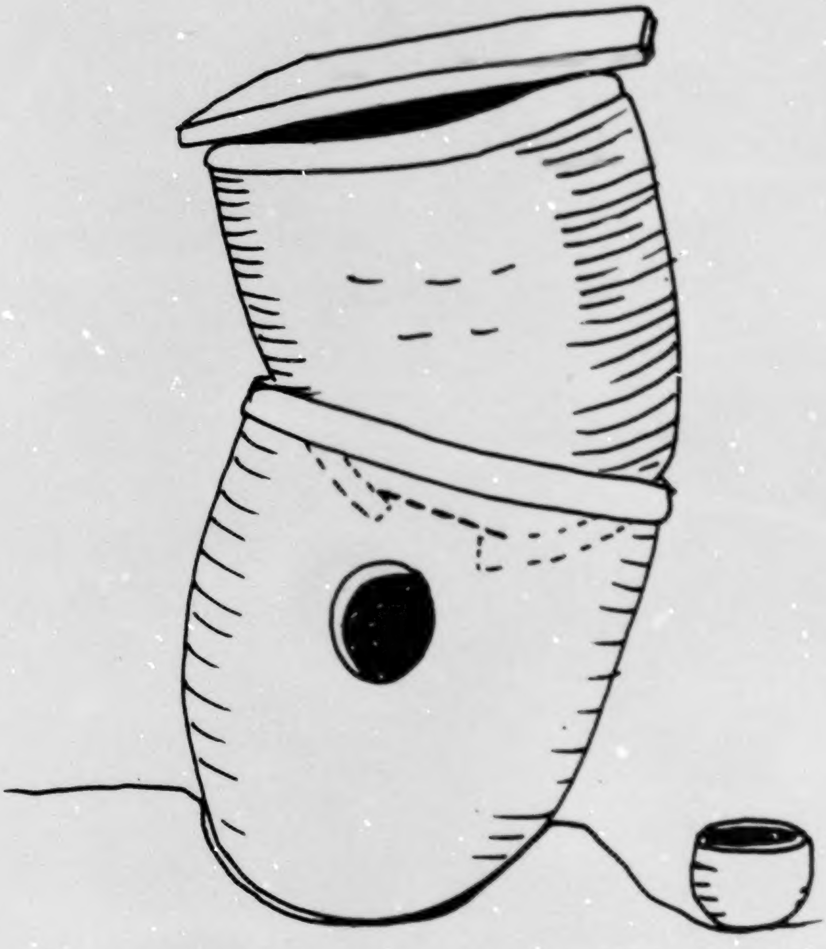


KILN FOR PREPARATION OF MORDANT ASH.

The alkaline solution is prepared by using two large pots, one with a hole in the side and the other with a hole in the bottom. The pot with the hole in the bottom is placed on top of the other, and the hole is covered with a mesh of small sticks and left-over indigo fibres from the dye-pot. Some of the ash balls are broken up, mixed with ash from the cooking fire, and placed upon the mesh. Water is then dripped through into the pot below, taking the potash with it.

As the water filters through, it is scooped out through the hole in the side of the second pot, and transferred to a dye-pot. When all the water has filtered through, the ash is replaced and the process is repeated until enough ash water is obtained. The resulting solution is now known as the mordant water.

Some women now use caustic soda instead of ashes to prepare the water. Although this reduces the time spent in preparing the dye, it presents the problem of knowing how much soda to use. If an excessive amount is put in, the dye is too alkaline, and loose dyeing occurs.



WATER FILTERS THROUGH ASH IN UPPER POT INTO LOWER POT.

The important place that dyeing holds in the history of south-west Nigeria is stressed by the fact that it was once practised everywhere, from the largest town to the smallest village. Most families, especially where more than one generation lived together, had a dyeing yard behind, or close to their compound.

Nevertheless, dyeing was more concentrated in some areas, especially in the northern half of Yorubaland. The towns of Ibadan, Oshogbo and Abeokuta are the three largest centres of production. Many excellent designers come from Abeokuta, whilst Ibadan is well renowned for its hand-painted, cassava-resist cloths. One observer has noted that, because the ground has become so stained with indigo, the compounds at Abeokuta all look as though they have been built on blue mud.

Abeokuta cloth is usually a great deal cheaper to buy than cloth from Ibadan, and is also more easily obtainable since many Ibadan cloths are made for private purchase.

Today, the Nigerian textile industry has been hit by soaring costs and by competition from imported cloths, many of which are being illegally smuggled into the country.

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U.K. SUPPLIERS OF MATERIALS

DYESTUFFS

Dyes - CIBA-GEIGY (UK) Ltd Ashton New Road, Clayton,
MANCHESTER 11

Printex - Windsor & Newton Ltd Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex

Polyprint pigment colours - E.C. McCreary & Co
21 Prince Edward Drive, BELFAST

Direct dyestuffs & Mordant - Skilbeck Brothers Ltd Bagnall House
(1lb tins only)
55-57 Glengall Road, LONDON SE15

Indigo grains - Skilbeck Brothers (as above)

Direct dyestuffs & mordant - Pronk, Davis & Rusby Ltd
(½lb or 1lb tins)
44 Penton Street, LONDON N1

Dylon Cold Water Dyes etc - Mayborn Products Ltd Dylon Works
139-147 Sydenham Road, LONDON EC26

Minimum 5lb lots of any dyestuff - ICI Dyestuffs Division
Hexagon House, Blackley,
MANCHESTER 9

CHEMICALS, THICKENING & WAX

All available from - Gould Thomas & Co Albert Road Keynshaw
SOMERSET

Batik Waxes - Alec Tirini Ltd 72 Charlotte Street, LONDON W1

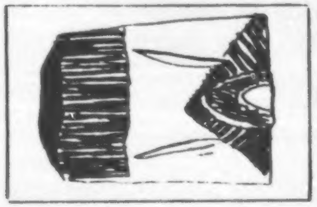
CANTING TOOLS

Available from - Dryad Handicrafts Ltd 22 Bloomsbury Street
LONDON WC1

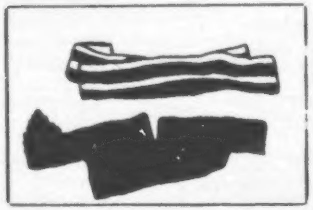
Dryad Handicrafts Ltd Northgates, LEICESTER

D. McKay 85 East Road, CAMBRIDGE

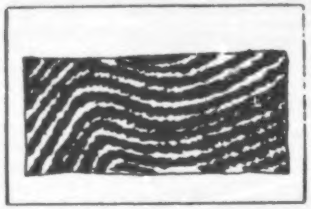
SLIDE IDENTIFICATION



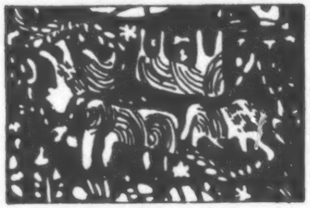
GOWN.
Indigo tie-dyed gown with embroidered collar.
Western Nigeria.
Lent by Vanley Burke.



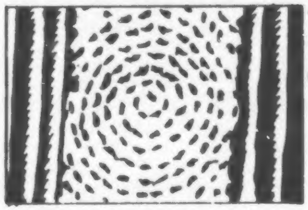
WRAPS.
Indigo dyed wraps.
Western Nigeria.
Lent by the Centre for West African Studies.



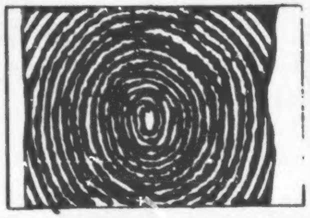
YORUBA CLOTH.
Brown tie-dyed cotton.
Yoruba in origin.
6'8"x2'10".
Printed Textiles Collection.



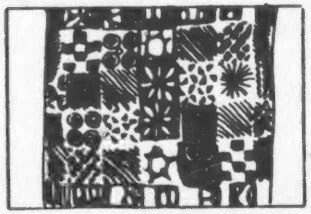
YORUBA ADIRE CLOTH.
Resist-dyed by means of starch applied through a stencil before cloth is immersed in indigo.
Design includes figures of elephants. 5'10"x5'5". C.W.A.S.



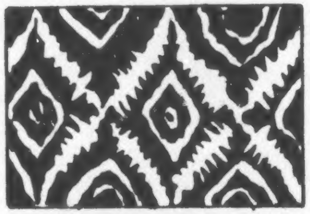
YORUBA ADIRE CLOTH.
Tie-dyed cotton shirting.
Centre for West African Studies.



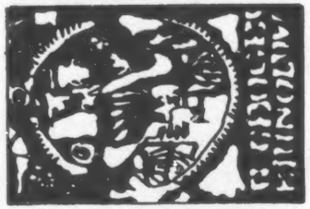
YORUBA ADIRE CLOTH.
Stitched before being dyed.
Made up of a number of strips sewn together.
Oshogbo, W. Nigeria. 5'7½"x4'6½".
Lent by Nick Stanley.



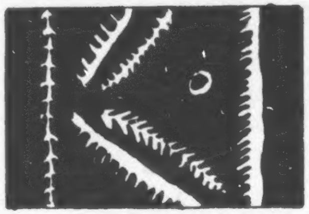
YORUBA ADIRE CLOTH.
Painted freehand with starch before dyeing. Combination of designs called 'Olukun'.
5'10x5'6½".
Centre for West African Studies.



YORUBA CLOTH.
Folded and tied before being dyed twice in yellow and blue.
5'9"x2'9".
Lent by Wade Turner.



YORUBA JUBILEE CLOTH.
Painted freehand with starch before dyeing. Stencilled lettering. Commemorates Jubilee of George V and Queen Mary.
Museum of Mankind 1971 AF 35.24.



YORUBA ADIRE CLOTH.
Stitched and small tied circles.
Pattern called 'Plantain' or 'the lazy man cannot be proud'.
Length 68"
Museum of Mankind 1953 AF 17.10